

LONDON SOCIETY.

MAY, 1892.

The Countess Pharamond.

(A SEQUEL TO "SHEBA.")

By "RITA,"

Author of "GRETCHEN," "THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN," "SHEBA," etc., etc

Book III.

CHAPTER II.

WHOLESOME DISCIPLINE.

"If I had only known you were here, Mr. Hill, I should have entertained you very differently," Mrs. Levison was saying. 'But that is so like Sheba, Keeping you the whole afternoon in her writing-room and never saying a word about it. And she is such a dreadful housekeeper—not even any preserves to put on the table. I really feel quite ashamed."

"Oh, pray don't apologize, my dear Mrs. Levison," said Noel. "I assure you a cup of tea is all I ever take at this hour. As for housekeeping"—he glanced wonderingly at the pale, tired face opposite—"I should think your daughter must have enough to do with her work, to excuse any little deficiencies in that respect."

He was thinking Mrs. Levison might surely do that herself. It could not be a very onerous task for such a small household.

"Oh! Sheba's *work*," said her mother, with fine contempt. "Much account that is! Scribbling a lot of nonsense about love and quarrelling, and dying, and making up. That's what all novels are about. I never see any difference in them except the names of the characters. But the characters themselves, they're all alike, and all do the same things described in different words. I assure you," she added triumphantly, "that I was speaking to a literary man the other night, at a party given by some friends of mine—very wealthy people—and I told him my opinion, and he said I was perfectly right. He had never heard the subject discussed so clearly and sensibly before."

"A literary man at the Matthew Levys'?" exclaimed Sheba.

"Well, he was a promoter of literature and had just started a new journal, *The Lady's* . . . something or other—Oh, *The Lady's Guide to Fashion*, that was it."

"But that is all about dressmaking!" said Sheba; "fashion-plates and dress patterns, and how to cut out your own gowns and jackets."

"Well—what of that?" said Mrs. Levison sharply. "It's literature, and it has to be edited, and the articles read, and the descriptions classified. I know that because this gentleman told me. And he said a good fashion magazine brought in thousands a year. Think of that. *Thousands!* I'm sure they're more useful and more sensible than novels."

"Very likely," said Noel Hill gravely; "but you would not call the caricatures in a comic journal art, Mrs. Levison, and there is the same slight difference between descriptions of dresses, and—character."

"Naturally you would side with Sheba," said Mrs. Levison; "you always did. But I wish you could drive some common-sense into her head. It is very hard on me in my poor state of health to have so much to attend to. I can't even get her to do my marketing on a Saturday morning. And I'm sure she needn't be too proud, for the rich people with whom I was staying made a point of seeing personally to their own housekeeping. I've known Mrs. Levy spend half an hour at the fishmonger's bargaining for a salmon, and she would often get a shilling taken off the original price."

"Oh, mother, don't quote those dreadful people and their mean ways," exclaimed Sheba impatiently. "You know I must devote my mornings to work. I've offered to do the Saturday marketing in the evening, but you won't allow me."

"I should think not indeed," scoffed Mrs. Levison. "I don't want all the refuse and leavings of the day for *my* Sunday table."

She spoke as if the keeping of that table was an elaborate and highly important ceremony.

Sheba sighed, remembering the eternal joint and badly cooked vegetables that usually furnished it. But since Mrs. Levison had seen Mrs. Matthew Levy bargaining for fish, cheapening fruit and vegetables, and combating the fancy prices of butchers on their own ground, she had established a similar form of housekeeping

and manfully struggled through the same duties once a week in virtuous imitation of so noble an example.

The servant was not to be trusted, on principle; Mrs. Levison still maintaining her prejudices as to the unworthiness of that class of beings. Sheba was too foolish and would pay whatever price was asked. It therefore became a duty that the mistress of the household should perform these little offices at the sacrifice of much personal comfort. If Sheba had wished to relieve her of such cares she would not have permitted it. Noel Hill, not feeling an intense interest in the relative prices of beef and mutton, or the advantage of getting a penny a pound off the said price by judicious worrying, tried to change the subject by inquiring as to Mrs. Levison's health.

Sheba gave him a despairing look, but it was too late. He had called down an avalanche of description on his head of all the complaints, past, present and to come, that that worthy lady had undergone or expected to undergo.

It was always pleasant to Mrs. Levison to think that in spite of the long martyrdom she had borne, there was a future martyrdom that still *might* be her portion. The sufferings already endured formed a hopeful background for such prophecies, and she grew melancholy and almost pathetic as she talked on and on, while Noel Hill drank his lukewarm tea, and Sheba sat still and patient on her chair, listening to that wearisome stream of medical terms and minute personal descriptions in which the soul of the hypochondriac revels. How he pitied this unfortunate daughter; how, looking back and remembering her lonely childhood, the unsympathetic surroundings of her youth, the sorrows of her dawning womanhood, he felt that scarcely could he have counselled patience or forbearance now.

The love and memory of childhood sanctify many of life's later troubles, but he knew only too well that in this girl's heart were no deep immovable roots, nothing that endeared such memory—nothing that awoke such love.

He looked at the saddened patience of her face and marvelled. No change he had imagined in her was so strange as this new, uncomplaining patience.

Mrs. Levison was quite unconscious that she was wearying her audience. Glibly and eloquently she continued her discourse, running up and down the gamut of professional phraseology—

picked up by judicious study of medical pamphlets, her favourite literature. She related the virtues or failures of all the various patent medicines she had tried, and ended by describing herself as a poor broken wreck.

Noel Hill murmured vague sympathy, and suggested that perhaps she had strayed a little too far into the tempting fields of the pharmacopœia, and adopted a wider variety of remedies than were safe or advisable for a single constitution to experiment upon.

This idea, however, Mrs. Levison indignantly scouted. Doctors had advised this, and suggested that, and recommended the other, and she declined to hear anything in their disfavour.

"Mother has a great opinion of the medical profession," said Sheba at last. "She is always happy when one of its members is in attendance. I think myself they have done her more harm than good."

"You always say that when the bills for their services come in," snapped Mrs. Levison; "they can't afford to work for nothing any more than other people. I assure you, Mr. Hill," she added, turning to Noel, "it is entirely her fault that I have been reduced to doctoring myself. She says we can't afford the expense of a proper medical man, so if I die she will be to blame."

"But, dear mother," exclaimed the girl, "there is nothing the matter with you—really. Your general health is excellent, and if your liver gets out of order now and then it is only from want of exercise, and a pill soon puts you right. The last doctor used to call here every day," she added to Noel, "and his bill amounted to £40 in three months. I simply told mother that our joint income could not possibly support such an unnecessary expense."

"Now you see, Mr. Hill, how I am treated in my own house; and I might as well have no daughter at all for all I see of Sheba. She is shut up in that little cupboard of a room scribbling from morning till night. No wonder she looks yellow and sickly. Not that she ever had anything of a complexion, you remember, even in Australia."

"Yes," said Noel, with a glance of unguarded tenderness at the mournful eyes that for a brief moment met his own. "I remember that very well. But there are better possessions even than complexions, Mrs. Levison."

"It is not as if her writing brought in anything, or did any good," continued Mrs. Levison. "I call it waste of time to spend every day of the year over an employment that doesn't bring in £100 at the year's end."

"I have made £200 this year, mother," said the girl gently.

"Oh, well, if you reckon up bills and things at six months' date . . . but they don't count. I mean actual money down, so much every month, or every three months."

"Would you like me to turn shop-girl, or governess, or telegraph clerk, and bring you my wages home weekly?" asked the girl.

Her lip took the old scornful curl—her face once again assumed that expression of cold contempt which her mother's opinions had been wont to rouse.

It woke a sense of uneasiness within Noel Hill, that sense of opposing elements which threaten collision at some imminent moment.

He tried to avert the danger, and broke fresh ground by inquiring for Dolly.

"She is very much improved," said Mrs. Levison, snapping at the bait; "so bright, and so pretty, and very accomplished. She comes into all her money when she is eighteen," she added with a sigh. "She is very good to me, and often comes over here to cheer me up. Indeed," and she glanced at the clock, "I half expect her this evening, Sheba. The Levys are going out to dinner, and she said she would come round here."

"Had we not better have the tea things removed then," suggested Sheba, rising from the table to ring the bell. "We are rather limited in accommodation," she added, turning to Noel Hill. "This room was called the drawing-room in the house agent's parlance, and my little three-foot square the dining-room. And there are three sleeping lofts and a bath-room upstairs—that is all."

"Yes; it is a miserable hole," exclaimed Mrs. Levison. "But Sheba hurried me into it whether I would or no. Indeed, the discomforts and privations of my life since I came to England, Mr. Hill, need all my Christian fortitude to sustain me."

"It is a comfort," said Sheba, "to remember how much worse they might have been but for that fortitude, and—Dolly."

"Oh! there she is, I believe," exclaimed Mrs. Levison, as a loud

ring resounded through the house. "Oh, pray don't go, Mr. Hill; you must see her. I'm sure you will be delighted with the change in her."

"The change in her! Good heavens! what are women made of?" murmured Noel to himself a few minutes later. If this was a change, it was assuredly not one for the better, according to a man's judgment.

A small over-dressed fashion-plate of a girl, who seemed to fill the tiny room and the tiny house with her own overbearing importance—a girl who talked, laughed, posed, moved for the sole purpose of showing herself off—a girl with none of the sweet homely fragrance of girlhood about her—a girl who repeated parrot-like the phrases and expressions that she heard from her elders, and chattered as noisily and foolishly as a little brook.

"Oh, I remember you quite well," she said to Noel Hill. "I remember the dinner party you came to at my father's, and how astonished you looked when you saw Sheba. But then she was decently dressed for once in her life."

Sheba laughed for the first time since Noel's arrival. "You would be sure to remember *that*," she said, "young as you were."

"Oh, I never forget anything," said Dolly, with a toss of her small fair head. She glanced mischievously at the young clergyman. "So you have come to England," she said. "Do you like it? I do. I shall be 'out' soon. I think one has better society here than in the colonies."

"Do you call Maida Vale 'society,' Dolly?" asked Sheba contemptuously.

"Oh, I shall get into a much better set than the Levys'," said Dolly; "*ça va sans dire*. I mean to play my cards well, I assure you."

"You are quite right, my dear," said Mrs. Levison. "You have *finesse*, wit, and natural tact. You ought to take a place in society far beyond that of the Levys' friends—wealthy as they are."

"I shall engage a chaperon," continued Dolly. She fixed her eyes on Mrs. Levison with a cruel enjoyment of that lady's excitement at this announcement, and a keen pleasure in dashing the hopes it buoyed, to the ground. "A chaperon," she went on, "who has title and position, and will give me the *entrée* to the best houses. I see advertisements constantly in the *Morning*

Post and other fashionable papers, so I know such chaperons are to be had—though they're expensive."

"That," said Mrs. Levison sourly, "needn't concern you."

"Oh, no, and it don't," said the young lady complacently. "It is a thing worth paying for, especially if I made a good marriage, as of course I shall." Then she grew meditative. "I've always thought I should like to be called 'my lady,'" she observed.

"It is a noble ambition," said Sheba quietly.

"Oh, of course, you're nasty as usual," said Dolly. "She isn't a bit more amiable than she used to be, Mr. Hill, and worries poor mamma dreadfully. Of course you know she has written a book?"

"I only know what all the world knows," said Noel Hill; "that she is a very gifted and a very famous author."

Dolly burst out laughing. "Sheba famous!" she cried. "Oh, that is very funny. It really is. Just writing one book! Why, she didn't make twenty pounds out of it—did you, Sheba? Not enough to buy a gown at Russell and Allen's. Do you call that being famous?"

"It certainly had not occurred to me that there might be a fame whose only merit was its money value," said Noel contemptuously; "thank you for correcting me, Miss Dolly."

"Oh, I am a very practical person," said Dolly complacently. "I assure you I'm very wide-awake indeed. I read Sheba's book, of course. I thought it awful bosh. So dreadfully romantic and—and unreal, you know. Not a bit like life."

"Perhaps not like Maida Vale life," said Sheba quietly.

"I daresay she will do better by-and-by," said Mrs. Levison encouragingly.

"One can always hope for that," said Noel Hill, rising and taking up his hat in suppressed indignation.

Sheba went out with him to the door. He looked at her silently, as he held her hand in his firm close clasp. "My poor child," he said at last.

"*Don't*," she cried, with sudden passion, and all the quiet and the patience of her face were dashed aside, as it were, by an invisible hand. "I can bear anything but pity. Never seem to pity me. After all it is only discipline. You used to tell me I needed it, and that it was wholesome. You were right. I assure you I find it very—wholesome."

CHAPTER III.

A YOUNG TACTICIAN.

"MAMMA! Sheba! Here, where are you all?" ejaculated a small whirling mass of millinery, dashing into Mrs. Levison's drawing-room a week after Noel Hill's first visit there.

"Whatever has happened?" cried Sheba, entering the room with her hands covered with flour, and her sleeves tucked up above her elbows. She had been instructing the small maid-servant in the art of making tea-cakes.

"The matter! Where's mamma? I want her to hear it also. It's the most astonishing thing, really. You might use it in one of your books, Sheba, only you never *do* put anything like real life into them."

"Perhaps if you could explain the wonderful occurrence I might be wise enough to use it as material," suggested Sheba.

"Well, I can't wait for mamma. Listen. I was driving in the Park this afternoon with Aunt Rachel, and who should I see coming along in a magnificent carriage, and such liveries!—my! but—well, *guess*, Sheba."

The girl turned so deadly white that Dolly was frightened.

"Why do you look so scared?" she said. "It wouldn't matter to you *now*. It was your old friend Bessie—Bessie Saxton—who married the Frenchman. Don't you remember?"

"Yes—I remember," said Sheba faintly.

"What is there about Bessie to frighten you so?" asked Dolly, looking at her curiously. "I know that Count Pharamond wanted to marry *you*, and that there was a row at home, and you ran off and married the singer—so mamma told me—and then he died, or ran away from you, didn't he? . . . and you came back to us."

"Don't!" cried Sheba passionately. "I . . . I can't bear to hear you chatter in that heedless way. Go on with your news about Bessie. Did she see you? Is she much altered?"

"Altered? I should think so. She is *très grande dame*, as the French say. So beautifully dressed. And oh, such a lovely carriage. No, she didn't see me. I wish she had."

"Are you quite sure it was Bessie?" said Sheba faintly.

"Sure! Of course I'm sure. Why, the count was with her. He's got so fat and looks so old. But no one could mistake

him. Won't mamma be astonished when she hears it? Of course you'll call."

Sheba shuddered. "Certainly not," she said. "At least, I won't. Mother can do as she pleases."

"Mother generally does," mimicked Dolly, turning to look at her impudent little face in the glass; "and mother is pretty sure to renew acquaintance with the countess. If she calls, I'll get her to take me; she's sure to do that if I promise her the carriage."

Sheba looked for a moment at the dressed-up little figure, the pert face, the elaborately-arranged hair of her step-sister. "Dolly," she said impatiently, "I don't often ask a favour of you . . . I'm going to ask one now. Will you grant it?"

"Depends," said Dolly with a sharp glance. "Do you want money too? I gave mamma five pounds last week to pay for bonnets."

Sheba flushed. "No, I don't want money. I only wish to ask you to keep silent about this—meeting. It can't matter very much to you. Bessie never was very fond of you, and . . . Dolly, I would so much rather that mother didn't hear about her being in England."

"How ridiculous you are," scoffed Dolly, looking at her with merciless scrutiny. "Why shouldn't I tell her? Indeed, for my own sake, I ought to. I want to know some titled people, and get out of the Jewish set. This is a golden opportunity. The countess must be rich, and I suppose she has two establishments, so I could have the benefit of being introduced to French society also. Not speak about it indeed! Why, I owe it to my own future interests to do so. I might never have such another chance."

Sheba looked at her hopelessly. The uselessness of speech or argument came home to her with a conviction born of long acquaintance with Dolly's selfishness and ambition.

A strange presentiment came over her in that moment . . . the shame and dread of meeting her girlhood's friend was burdened also with the fear that this meeting—however long she might evade it—was inevitable, and boded no good for either.

She was so absorbed in these thoughts that she forgot Dolly. That young lady had skipped over to the mirror, and having removed her hat, was occupied in re-arranging her hair.

"There!" she exclaimed at last, as she turned to Sheba. "That was the way Bessie had her hair done. So *chic*, isn't it? I took note of it directly, so as to show my maid Richards. And her bonnet . . . Oh, it was exquisite. Fancy the palest, *palest* green crêpe and two or three pink roses *thrown* on it. Not fixed stiffly, like Aunt Rachel's or your mother's, but looking almost as if they were growing there. And her hair looked brighter than it used to do. Altogether, she *was* good style, I can tell you; and I don't study the Park for nothing. . . . By the way, mamma said you were going to buy a new dress this week. Do let me go with you. You've such poor taste. It's such a pity. I often think you wouldn't be a bad-looking girl if you dressed yourself decently. But you never cared about fashion . . . Do you remember in Sydney, when you wouldn't wear a crinoline, and Toinette made all your frocks? . . . What was that she used to say? 'Mademoiselle, she need not to follow *la mode* . . . she has *l'air distingué*.' I wonder if she was right?"

She stood opposite her step-sister, surveying her with cold, critical eyes.

That tall, slight figure, in its simple black gown, had a something about it that she, with all her art and thought and study, could never copy, and never gain. It puzzled her now, as it had puzzled her in other days; and engendering dissatisfaction, made her also ill-humoured.

"I think you will be a dowdy always," she said with kindly candour. "But perhaps it suits you, especially if you are going to pose as a genius. Me"—with an airy frank gesture—"I would prefer to be like the Countess Bessie. By the way, what a pretty name for her. I shall tell her I invented it."

"What is a pretty name?" asked Mrs. Levison, entering at that moment.

"Oh, how are you, mamma? I was dying to see you. The pretty name was one I've given your old friend, Bessie Saxton. Fancy! I saw her to-day, driving in Hyde Park, with her husband."

"Saw Bessie Saxton!"

Mrs. Levison glanced at her daughter in a conscious, half-shamed manner. But Sheba's downcast eyes were unresponsive.

Dolly had spoken. It did not matter now. Her own pain or fears or shame were as nothing. She must only hide them in

the depths of her proud heart once more, and act as if they were not.

Dolly rattled on volubly, delighted at the importance of her news, and dilating fondly on the Parisian bonnet and toilette—*très chic* (as she termed it)—of the countess. Mrs. Levison listened in envious wonder.

"And to think you might have been in her place, Sheba," she said at last. "A real countess, instead of living in a little hovel like this, and obliged to slave from morning till night for a paltry income that isn't half as much as she gives her maid."

Dolly laughed her little shrill laugh. "Sheba could never have been a great lady," she said; "she is such a noodle. She never seems to understand anything except books. Me—I know the world and its ways quite well already. I mean to go the pace when I'm married, I can tell you. I shall live in France, I think. They get much more fun out of life than we do. Aunt Rachel looks shocked when I tell her so, but of all strict goody-goody couples commend me to a Jewish husband and wife."

"Hush, Dolly, my dear," said Mrs. Levison rebukingly. "You really mustn't talk like that. It doesn't sound nice for a young girl."

"Phish!" scoffed Dolly, tilting her saucy nose. "It doesn't matter what I say *here*. Of course, I couldn't talk like that in society until I *was* married. Then——"

She closed her lips expressively, and made a little pirouette on the floor. Then she came coaxingly up to Mrs. Levison.

"You will come with me and call on the Countess Bessie, mamma, won't you?" she said. "Now say 'yes.' You must, or else I'll take Aunt Rachel, and you wouldn't like that. I'll have the carriage for you, and you can wear the new bonnet. You really look nearly as young as Bessie in it. That's the best of being so fair."

Mrs. Levison glanced complacently at her reflection. She liked to think that time stood still for her, and was as easily flattered as a child.

"I must consider about it, dear," she said. "I don't know if she . . . dear me, how funny it seems to think of Bessie being a countess . . . if she would care to see us."

"Well—but we can call first—and find out if she cares afterwards," said the worldly-wise Dolly, who always stuck to her point until she had gained it.

"True," said Mrs. Levison, glancing somewhat nervously at Sheba. "What do you say?" she asked her daughter. "Will you come with us? You were such very great friends once."

"If you have forgotten the way that that friendship was broken and ended," said Sheba coldly, "I have not. You and Dolly can do as you please, but I do not call on the Countess Pharamond."

Then she left the room.

Dolly tossed her fair head with immeasurable contempt.

"Isn't she absurd? Just as if things mattered that happened long ago."

"I have always wished that Providence had made you my daughter instead of that unfortunate Sheba," said Mrs. Levison with a deep sigh. "At least we have *some* ideas in common."

"Yes, we have," said Dolly with her little malicious grin. "And one of them is that we'll call on the countess together, eh, my good little pretty mamma? You know I like going out with you. You're so stylish, and so different to Aunt Rachel."

It was by speeches such as this that Dolly invariably gained her own ends, Mrs. Levison's memory being of that convenient sort that she could forget all the little stabs, insults, and indifference of her step-daughter at one time, if she only flattered and wheedled her at another.

Besides she really had a strong curiosity to see Bessie under these new auspices. She marvelled greatly at her appearance in London. How would she conduct an establishment, rule society, and carry the honours of her position?

She had a malicious desire to find her at fault in some or one detail, and the possibility of doing so lent additional charm to Dolly's persuasions. Little by little she yielded, though the fact of seeing Count Pharamond somewhat interfered with the pleasure this visit promised. Besides, by yielding to her step-daughter she made that young lady her debtor in the future, and established a claim for those trifling loans or gifts, which so materially assisted her private expenditure.

She seldom dared let Sheba know the actual price of a gown or a bonnet, but Dolly knew very well, and the shopping expeditions in which her soul delighted, were not unfrequently occasions for displaying her own importance and the advantages of heiressship.

It was arranged, therefore, that the proposed visit should be made in befitting style as soon as Dolly could ascertain the address of the countess.

"But there can be no difficulty about *that*," she said, as she finally took herself off, "for the Levys have all the society papers. They get them so as to be able to talk about titled people, or copy their dresses."

CHAPTER IV.

A GENEROUS PUBLISHER.

"SHEBA," said Mrs. Levison abruptly, as they sat at breakfast the next morning, "can you let me have some money? That wretched woman, Madame Filoselle, has written me a most impertinent letter, demanding a settlement of her account and refusing to execute any further orders until she is paid."

"I wonder you go to her," said Sheba. "She is dreadfully expensive, and she never fits you properly."

"She has a name," said Mrs. Levison, "and makes for all the best people."

"In Maida Vale—yes; but as they think taste is only to be reckoned by price I should not be led by them, if I were you."

"Indeed you are quite wrong. Filoselle makes for people in Belgrave Square, and Portland Place and—other fashionable neighbourhoods. I've seen the box-lids addressed to all sorts of titles. She puts them in her window."

"What—the titles?" asked Sheba.

"No—the box-lids. How very stupid you are, Sheba!"

"I suppose I am," said her daughter. "For I should consider that action alone stamped the woman as a vulgar impostor. What is easier than to get a few box-lids, and have grand names and addresses printed on them? They need not *necessarily* go to those addresses. But doubtless Filoselle knows her customers."

"Of course you abuse her because I deal there," whimpered Mrs. Levison, "and because Mrs. Levy introduced me. You never have any sympathy or consideration for me."

"What is the amount?" asked Sheba abruptly, taking up some letters that lay beside her plate.

"Twenty-five pounds would do," said her mother rather shamefacedly. "I—I have a little ready money of my own."

"Twenty-five pounds! Isn't that a rather heavy quarterly item out of three hundred a year?"

"I knew you would scold and abuse me—you always do. But I've been accustomed to be well dressed, and I—I can't forget it, although my position has altered." Mrs. Levison spoke in the injured, defensive tone of an accused person—a tone she had of late adopted.

Her daughter did not speak for some minutes. She was reading a letter that bore the Mixsonian address and signature—a letter which seemed to surprise her. "I suppose I shall have to go there—he says it is urgent," she remarked as she replaced the letter in its envelope. Then noting her mother's anxious expression she explained, "The publishers want to see me this morning. They say it is urgent. Perhaps there may be good news. If so, I will let you have the money, mother. My new book is nearly finished. I might ask for an advance of at least twenty pounds."

Mrs. Levison shook her head despondently. "I never look for good news where you are concerned, Sheba. You were born under an unlucky star, I am sure. Why, the very first time you ever sat at table you spilt the salt. I remember that quite well, for your poor father was so angry he sent you back to the nursery. And you always will walk under ladders in spite of all I've told you—and the very last time there was a new moon you saw it through glass. So for the next month, at all events, you will be unlucky."

"I'm thankful I am not superstitious," said Sheba as she rose from the table. "How can such absurd trifles affect one's destiny?"

"I don't know how they can, but they *do*," said Mrs. Levison. "Misfortunes fall upon some people as if they loved them. If you look back on your life, Sheba——"

"Oh, please don't say any more!" cried the girl hastily. "If I am to be unlucky—well, I shall be. That's enough of the subject. Now I must be off and see what Mixson wants. I promise you, mother," she added with a faint smile, "that I won't walk under any ladders on my way."

* * * *

There was buoyancy and exhilaration in the sweet spring air as the girl took her way to the now well-known offices. Even

the cramped streets and dismal architecture which make London one of the most unbeautiful of cities, took a little brightness under the clear sky and brilliant sunshine.

March was waning, though the young shoots had scarcely ventured forth on the blackened boughs of the elms, and hyacinths and crocuses were but just appearing in flower-beds and flower-girls' baskets.

Sheba walked to the Marble Arch, delighting in the unaccustomed exercise and the delicious coolness of the air. From there she took an omnibus to her destination, and was ushered into Mixson's office with something of the freshness and exhilaration of the spring morning in her glowing eyes and faintly-flushed cheeks.

"Why, what blooming rosebud is this?" exclaimed the great Mixson, whose frame was a little more portly, whose complexion a little more florid, than they had been a year before. "It does Pat Mixson's heart good to look at you, Miss Ormatroyd. Prompt as ever, I see—beauty and business—wonderful combination. Shame for beauty that it requires such a sordid and commonplace setting. I was thinking this dingy barracks needed a *ray* of sunlight, Miss Ormatroyd, when—you appeared. Ha! ha! excuse the joke—ray—Raye—not so bad for an old man. Ha, ha, ha!"

His loud laugh echoed through the office and woke appreciative smiles from the clerks. To Sheba it only brought the old sense of annoyance—the desire that this man would keep to matters connected with his business and hers, instead of wasting time in fulsome compliments and foolish witticisms.

"But, sit down—sit down," he went on when his mirth had exhausted itself. "I know you're a very impatient young lady, and of course you want to hear my reasons for sending for you. Jones," he added to his head clerk, "go into the other room till I ring."

The clerk obeyed, and the great man bent nearer to Sheba, fingering meanwhile a slip of paper on which was a row of figures. "Now, Miss Ormatroyd, to business. This is strictly confidential—a matter between you and myself; I've not mentioned it to the Firm at all."

As the Firm was solely and entirely Mixson, and he was only responsible to himself for his doings, this remark was doubtless

another of those peculiar jokes in which the great man loved to indulge when the cares of office became oppressive. "No," he went on with a rapid glance at Sheba, "I've not spoken of it to any one . . . You really must pardon me, my darling—only an old man's weakness, you know—but you do look more charming than ever this morning. Ah! there's nothing like the dew of youth sparkling in beauty's eyes, and melting on beauty's lips."

"Now pray, Mr. Mixson," began Sheba in a tone of real annoyance. "Let me beg of you to waive all nonsense of this sort. You know I hate it. Come straight to the point and let me hear what you want with me."

"Pat Mixson would need be a bold man to tell you *that*, my dear . . . But there, you needn't be cross. I'll try and forget I'm speaking to a pretty woman, though, indeed 'tis the most difficult thing for me to do. Well, to come to the point. I've been looking over the accounts of your book. Did you get the last statement, by the way?"

"Yes. I was rather——"

"Gratified? Of course—of course. It's quite an unparalleled experience in my knowledge for any young author to make a profit out of a first book."

"I was going to say—disappointed," said Sheba coldly. "The sale seemed so large in comparison with the profits—the author's profits, I mean."

"Seemed. . . . Perhaps so. The figures looked large on paper. But consider the expenses. I told you I'd spare nothing to bring you out *well*. Sure I've done that, Miss Ormatroyd. You've been advertised through the length and breadth of the land."

"I know that," said the young author. "I was going to say the advertisements seemed to have cost an immense sum. I would rather have had less spent on that item, and a little more in pocket."

"Ah now, Miss Ormatroyd," said the great man waggishly, "there steps in that adorable but feminine idea! Money . . . money to waste on bonnets and finery, when you might be laying the foundation-stone of a magnificent fortune! How many authors have ruined themselves by that failing! A sum in hand—and let the future go. It is well for you, young lady, that you've a friend like Pat Mixson to watch over your interests. You'll say so yourself some day."

He looked keenly at her from beneath his heavy eyebrows.

"Do you care very much for money?" he asked sharply.

"For myself—no," said Sheba, colouring. "But I have others—to consider."

"Ah . . . um. Yes. I see how the land lies. Well, perhaps I can help you even there."

He consulted his slip of paper, and for a moment seemed lost in abstruse mental calculations.

"We've paid you one cheque," he went on, "and there's another due very soon, which I propose giving you to-day, if you wish, instead of your waiting for the next statement. But I have a proposition to make to you first. The balance in your favour is £17 14s. 9d. Well, I want you to make over the copyright of the book to me in consideration of . . . say £25 paid down. It is a mere form. The value of copyright in a book after its first two editions is comparatively *nil*. But if I had an interest in it I might feel inclined to work up that book with a view to your future writings. That is to say, I spend the money on it *now*, that you may benefit in the future. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Sheba quietly. "But I prefer to retain my interest in the copyright."

"Oh! Very well—then the matter is at an end. You are acting against your own interests, though; and you will find I am advising you for the best. Of course you will prefer waiting now till the half-yearly accounts are made up, and that will close our connection with this book. It is comparatively dead, and I shall not issue any further editions."

Sheba looked disconcerted. "Must I wait till June for that cheque?" she said.

The great Mixson noted the change in face and voice, and took advantage of it. "Of course," he said. "Business is business. You choose to treat my offer with contempt. I therefore relegate you to your own proper position again, and deal with you—not as a friend—but as a stranger."

Sheba thought of Filoselle's bill—of her mother's wrath and reproaches—and her resolution gave way. "Forgive me, Mr. Mixson. I'm sure you mean kindly, and I . . . I hope you would not take advantage of my inexperience."

"My dear young lady—when you speak like that you hurt Pat Mixson in his tenderest point. Take advantage . . . and of a

woman, too! Why, I'm the slave of your sex. They do what they wish with me. Offended! . . . God bless your sweet face! Not I! . . . Here, we'll say no more about it. I'll make it thirty pounds for copyright . . . and a cheque on the spot. I'll write it this moment . . . and you sign this form, and don't bother about it any more."

The thought of that bill—the idea of being able to go home and hand her mother the money—again swept away the girl's better judgment. Besides, she was very ignorant as yet of the ways of publishers.

Mixson drew out his cheque-book, and rapidly wrote out a cheque, at the same time summoning his head clerk as a witness to the transaction. Sheba felt a strange misgiving as she saw the document which denuded her of all further rights in her book; but her need was great, and the future looked hazy and uncertain.

She could not afford to wait, or afford to quarrel with the great man. She meekly signed as she was directed, and received the munificent sum of thirty pounds out of the pocket into which her book had already put hundreds.

The business finished, Mixson remembered an important engagement, and signified the interview was over. He made no more flowery speeches, or hinted delicate flatteries. He was too good a man of business to waste material when his end was gained. As the door closed on Sheba, he turned sharply to his clerk.

"Jones," he said, "where is that letter from Gibbons the dramatist that came yesterday?"

Jones rose from his place, and found the required missive pigeon-holed in a corner of the desk. He handed it to his master with a somewhat significant glance, remembering the transaction he had just witnessed.

Mixson took it, and ran his eyes hurriedly over the contents. Then he noted a few instructions on the back of the letter, and gave it to his clerk. "Write that out at once. 'Heron Raye' has no rights in this book. I will permit it to be dramatized on condition that I receive half the profits every time the piece is played. Title to be altered as he suggests."

The clerk took the letter and retired to his desk, and a few moments later the great Mixson went out to lunch.

"My eye! Isn't the gov'nor sharp?" then observed his chief clerk. "He's made a pot of money out of that new girl's book, and now this morning he got her to sell him the copyright for thirty pounds! Think of that. And it's going to be dramatized; so, if it succeeds, he'll net a nice little profit out of *that* transaction.

The clerks listened with bated breath. The ways of Mixson were not as the ways of common mortals. Was not the colossal edifice he had built up, a startling proof of enterprise and good management? Mixson knew that "Nothing succeeds like success," and had laid that trite and time-honoured maxim well to heart. He had determined to be successful, and he had been so; and, by the help of Providence, meant to go on being so, to the end of the chapter.

From the first, he had marked Sheba Ormatroyd as likely to be successful. He saw she had genius. *That* was undoubted. Even the critics allowed it, with that reluctance born of official importance, which, as all men know, *must* recognize no merit as superior to its own opinion. This great body of useful authorities had actually chirped forth unanimous praise of a book by an unknown author. It was not strictly unanimous, of course. The leading critic of the leading critical journal, had discovered that the book was marred by a few botanical errors, which had as much relation to the plot, style, or character of the work as a fly might have to an elephant. However, he pinned his faith as to the worthlessness of the whole three volumes, on a trifling error discovered in the first.

Sheba learnt, later on, that this captious individual lived at Clapham, and prided himself on his skill as an amateur gardener. Naturally, no one would expect such a personage to be reconciled to the monstrous assertion that cucumbers grew without a frame, and that oleanders and roses bloomed in the same month. The fact of such eccentricities on the part of Nature being perpetrated in a land he had never visited, only made the disciple of horticulture more indignant and incredulous.

He put down "Heron Raye" as an ignoramus, and opined, in a series of sharply ironical paragraphs, that young ladies who elected to be known by ridiculous *noms de plume* and padded their volumes of sentimental irrationality with mistakes that would have shamed an uneducated market gardener, were not

the sort of beings to be encouraged to tread the thorny paths of literature. Having delivered himself of these opinions, the great critic turned to his garden-roller and his currant bushes, and smoked the pipe of peace in serene content till the next batch of books demanded his attention.

Sheba went home through the bright spring sunshine, light of heart and hopeful.

She must be getting on, surely, and she must be worth something, or Mixson would never have offered to buy the copyright of the book. Perhaps her next one would bring her in double as much. Poor girl! She forgot her contract and the terms that might bring hundreds to her publisher, while simply apportioning as her share the small sum fixed by that contract.

CHAPTER V.

A TRANSFORMATION.

"I HAVE found out her address, mamma!" cried Dolly eagerly, as she dashed into Mrs. Levison's presence a few days later. "It was in *Society Scandal*. She is staying in Grosvenor Street. They have taken a house for the season. When shall we call? Did you get a dress?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Levison. "I managed to pay Filoselle, and she is to send me one by to-night."

"What's it like? You might have taken me," pouted Dolly. "You never choose pretty gowns unless I'm with you."

"This is exquisite," said Mrs. Levison. "Peach-coloured silk covered with black lace. It was a copy of a Paris dress. She showed it me *privately*, as a great favour."

Mrs. Levison might have experienced a little surprise if she had known how many other customers of Madame Filoselle's had been favoured with a similar "private view." But that astute Parisienne, who originally hailed from Whitechapel, and had served a long and sharp apprenticeship to notable firms before establishing herself, knew her sex very well, and encouraged them with the *finesse* of a female Machiavelli.

"I hope I shall like it," said Dolly doubtfully. "It sounds all right—but then so do heaps of dresses when you *read* a description of them. It's when you see them made up you find out there's a want—a *je ne sais quoi*—which turns them into a deadly failure. But never mind about that now. Look here!

This is the paper. You'll find a description of Bessie's appearance at Lady Powderpuff's first 'At Home.' And then—see, this is the paragraph: 'We understand that the Count and Countess Pharamond have taken the town house of Lady St. Aubyn, in Grosvenor Street, for the season. The countess is one of the beauties of Parisian society, and is allied by her marriage to some of the oldest and most aristocratic families in France.' There!"

"And it might have been Sheba," sighed Mrs. Levison, as she took the society paper from her step-daughter's hand. "The idea of being so important a personage as to be noticed in a journal like this!"

"Oh, that's easy enough," said Dolly contemptuously. "Any one can get a paragraph in a society paper nowadays if they pay for it. Everybody wants to know what everybody else does, says, or wears. And the Smiths and the Joneses can get a notice just as easily as a duchess or a princess, if they write out what they want said, and inclose a cheque with it to the editor."

"This is a very levelling age," said Mrs. Levison. "When I was young, no paper *dared* say the personal things they do now—especially about the royalty and aristocracy of the country. I wonder it is allowed."

"It's very useful," said Dolly with a grin. "I like to know all about those people. I mean to get into their set some day, by hook or by crook, so I'm studying them and their doings now. I think it will come very easy then to follow their lead. Oh, how thankful I shall be when I'm out, and have done with those old owls of teachers, and can do just what I like!"

Mrs. Levison looked at her with that mingling of wonder and petulance which her audacious words and consummate self-importance not unfrequently aroused.

Her malicious precocity and her secondhand knowledge of worldly ways and worldly wickedness almost terrified her step-mother, to whom such things appeared far too improper for the outspoken interpretation which Dolly delighted in giving to them.

The girl herself did not fully comprehend the extent of what she said, or the inconceivable shamelessness to which the society gossipers alluded in their highly spiced paragraphs, but she pretended that she did so, and retailed the incidents of any

particular scandal with the zest of a club *blagueur*. The mild rebukes of her Aunt Rachel, and the shocked ejaculations of Mrs. Levison, or the mute disgust of Sheba, were all a delightful tribute to her knowledge of "this wicked world" and its ways.

She read bits from *Society Scandal* to her step-mother this morning, interlarding them with additions of her own, or private information she had received from friends of the Levys, who had proved useful in the matter of "accommodation" to needy aristocrats and ladies of the *haut monde*, whose diamonds were as far above reproach as their reputations—except to the "accommodating" gentry aforesaid.

When Dolly had exhausted her stock of information, she bound her step-mother down to a promise that the next afternoon should be that for the proposed visit, and then took her leave.

"I won't intrude on the dear old mole," she said as she shook out her lace flounces in the tiny hall. "I suppose she's burrowing into books and dictionaries as usual. Oh! how glad I am that I'm not a genius! By the way," she added, raising her shrill little voice so that it reached the pale student in her tiny room, "you can tell Sheba that I heard such a capital definition of genius the other day. It means 'a person who can do anything but make money.' Isn't it good? You tell her that. Ta-ta! Now don't keep me waiting to-morrow, for I don't want to get out of the carriage. Sykes doesn't care about opening the door too often."

Then she ran off, leaving Mrs. Levison to the blissful anticipation of the peach-coloured dress, and the forthcoming ceremony which it was to grace.

* * * * *

It would be difficult to imagine a face of more blank and haughty astonishment than the face which the Countess Pharamond lifted from her book, as the door of her boudoir was thrown open and the names of "Mrs. and Miss Levison" announced by a gorgeous being in crimson plush and white silk stockings, who condescended to sit in the hall and receive the cards of the countess's fashionable friends.

The wonder passed into an expression of wrath and indignation as the door closed, and Bessie rose and slowly faced these two over-dressed and most unwelcome visitors.

"You are surprised to see us, I am sure, my dear Bessie," said Mrs. Levison gushingly. "I only learnt you were in England the other day, and I lost no time in coming to see you."

She took the reluctant hand, and her eyes wandered admiringly over the changed figure and its gorgeous surroundings. Dolly then burst in with an ecstatic and ardent greeting, and a shower of exclamations that covered her step-mother's embarrassment.

"I saw you driving in the Park the other day, and I made mamma promise to bring me. How happy I am to see you again . . . you dear, dear Bessie! Isn't it wonderful our all being in England? I came over to finish my education. Oh! of course, you don't know . . . I'm an heiress. Papa left me all his money. He always said he would. And next year I'm coming out."

"Oh, indeed . . . Yes, it is a surprise to see you," said the countess coldly, as she seated herself on the Louis Quinze couch, from which she had been aroused in this unwelcome fashion. "I am only in London for a few months," she added. "My home is in France, as perhaps you remember."

"Oh, yes—I remember very well," said Mrs. Levison, rather piqued by this chilling reception. "And how is your husband? I suppose you are very happy?"

Bessie did not flinch. She only smiled coldly, and said with serene indifference, "Oh, perfectly. Shall I let him know you are here?"

"Oh, not yet, please, Bessie," exclaimed Dolly eagerly; "I've such thousands of things to tell you—and I *am* so glad to see you. It's quite true what the papers said. You *are* beautiful. I don't wonder you were the rage in Paris."

"How do you know so much about me?" asked the countess, with a suspicious glance at the little animated fashion-plate before her.

"I read it in the society papers," said Dolly. She was not disconcerted or put out by the countess's *hauteur*. She ignored it altogether, maintaining, as one of her rules for social success, that it was always best *not* to see anything you did not wish to see. It saved so much unpleasantness.

Something of the old sense of wonder and amusement with which Bessie had been wont to regard this astute young person woke up again within her, as she looked at and listened to her now.

"Oh!" she said. "Do you read those things? I never do."

"Why?" asked Dolly, rather crestfallen. "That's the only way to get information about people."

"Perhaps it is for you," said Bessie, with languid contempt. "But when you *know* the people you don't require secondhand information, procured by bribing ladies' maids and footmen."

Dolly coloured. Bessie had changed—horribly, unaccountably. She could not understand these *grande-dame* airs—the cold smile, the haughty glances, the whole severe and chilling insolence which made up the manner of the countess. Evidently she was not pleased to see her old friends, nor desirous of renewing the intimacy between them.

Mrs. Levison here interposed with that fine tact for which she was famous.

"You hadn't always ladies' maids and footmen, Bessie, and glad enough you were in those days to accept *my* hospitality, and make my house your home. You seem to think yourself a very grand lady now, but I'd like to know what you'd have been but for me?"

A faint pink flush rose to the face of the Countess Pharamond.

"Your remarks are not in the best possible taste, Mrs. Levison," she said icily. "Please remember that *I* have not sought this interview, and that it may not be as pleasant to me as to yourself."

"Oh, do be quiet, mamma!" exclaimed Dolly angrily. "You'll spoil everything. Look here, Bessie," she went on coaxingly, "I assure you I thought you'd be as glad to see me as I was to see you. But if you're really so very grand now—and—and don't care about us any more—why—why——"

She broke off, and glanced appealingly at the fair, handsome face, set like a mask in its cold pride.

"I am not aware I ever did care about any of you—very much," said Bessie indifferently, "except Sheba, poor girl. But now that she is dead I really think——"

"Sheba *dead*!" exclaimed Dolly and her step-mother simultaneously.

"Who on earth told you that?" continued Mrs. Levison.

"I—I heard it—a short time ago," stammered Bessie, losing her self-control for a moment. "Isn't it true?"

"True?" Dolly's shrill laughter pealed through the room. "True? Gracious! I should think not. She's as much alive as you or I. What could have put such an idea into your head?"

The Countess Pharamond's face had grown very pale. The white hands fluttering the leaves of the book she held, trembled exceedingly.

"Then she is alive and with—you?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Levison.

"Yes," said that lady. "She came back to me after—after that unfortunate affair with the singer. The wretched man turned out to be married, and Sheba found it out—and—well, it is very distressing to a mother to speak on such a subject. I—I really cannot bear to hear it mentioned."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes. She did not see the strained, horrified gaze of the face before her. The Countess Pharamond seemed strangely disturbed by the news she had received.

"To think you shouldn't know!" chirped Dolly. "How funny! It was very dreadful—and when Sheba came back you wouldn't have known her. She looked like a ghost, and was so ill. But she's all right now; she's taken to writing books. We wanted her to come here to-day, but she wouldn't."

"Why?" The proud lips could scarcely frame the inquiry, they trembled so.

"Why? Oh, she'll never go anywhere. She mopes by herself, and scribbles from morning till night. Poor mamma hasn't a very lively time of it, I can tell you."

"Indeed, no," said Mrs. Levison, delighted to air her pet grievance. "But Sheba was never like a daughter to me. You remember that of old, Bessie?"

Still the countess sat there—pale, unable, so it seemed, to recover her lost composure.

"I—I should like to see her. I *must* see her," she said at last. "Mrs. Levison, forgive me if I seemed discourteous a moment ago. I—I was put out. I didn't mean it. You were right. One ought not to forget old friends—and Sheba was my earliest friend; we were like sisters once. Bring her here, or, stay, I will come and see her, soon—to-morrow, if that will suit you. May I?"

In her eagerness she rose, and the book she had held in her nervous grasp fell to the ground. Dolly picked it up.

"Why!" she exclaimed, "this is Sheba's book. How funny! That's the name she writes under—'Heron Raye.' Awfully silly, isn't it? But she won't be advised by me."

"*That*—her book!" Bessie took it from the girl, and the expression of her face was so strange that Mrs. Levison found herself studying it with a new sense of wonder, into which something like fear had crept.

"Yes, I suppose you are astonished. It's not up to much, and she's only made fifty pounds by it; but perhaps she'll do better some day. You were saying you would like to call on us. I—I really am almost ashamed to ask you to our poor dwelling. But things have changed since the old days. The wheel of fortune has gone round, and I am no longer what I used to be."

"It doesn't matter," said Bessie vaguely—"I mean I would not find any difference. I—I only want to see Sheba."

"Then come to-morrow," said Dolly quickly.

"I will," said the countess. "Tell her to expect me."

They took their leave then, wondering not a little at the extraordinary transformation rank and riches had made in the girl they remembered. They would have wondered more had they seen the change in the woman they had left. When the closing door had shut her into solitude, she took up the book—looking at it as if it were some noxious thing. "She has not forgotten—either," she muttered. "The woman who wrote this, wrote it with her very heart's blood. . . . Alive, gifted, famous. My God, how I *hate* her! What chance have I if they should meet now? How could he have lied to me? . . . Or does he really believe she is dead? Oh, Paul! that you might think it always—always—always—if it could only bring you nearer to my longing heart!"

She flung the book far from her with a gesture of horror and disgust, and hid the wild passion of her face within her shuddering arms.

(*To be continued.*)

A Famous Lady of the Last Century.*

IN an interesting essay on the question, "How true history ought to be written," the celebrated Greek rhetorician Lucian passes upon an historical writer of his own age a critical judgment somewhat severe. The head and front of this scribe's offending was that in narrating a campaign of the Romans against the Parthians, he had devoted only a few lines to the great and terrible battle of Europus, while he had enlarged in the most undignified and trivial manner imaginable upon the adventures of one Mausacas, a Mausilanian trooper in the Roman army. The historian had narrated how Mausacas had fallen in with an Assyrian peasant of the neighbourhood who had travelled in Africa; how cordially the said peasant had received him and had treated him to dinner; how graphically he had described his wanderings among the elephants and the lions in the Sahara; how he had landed at Cæsarea on his journey home, and how much the purchase of fish had cost him in the market place there. As a critic we have no doubt that Lucian in his strictures was correct. And yet so much does the relative interest of past events change as the world grows older, that now, after the lapse of two thousand rolling years, we do not hesitate to say that the most erudite classical scholar in Christendom would gladly exchange the minutest account of the battle of Europus that was ever penned, for a description of the personal appearance of the Assyrian peasant, of the various kinds of dishes which graced his table, of his wonderful experiences in darkest Africa, of the numbers of lions and elephants he met in the desert, not omitting even a little statistical information respecting the fish market at Cæsarea in the second century. Even so it is with regard to times ever so much later than these. How many bales of treaties and blue books would we not readily barter for a bundle of unpublished family letters, or a manuscript diary that had long lain hid. How gladly do we welcome the publication of a

*"Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke." Two vols. Privately printed by the Earl of Home.

budget of old-time correspondence, and what blessings we invoke upon the head of the Earl of Home for his goodness in printing, even though it be for the delectation of the select few, the letters and journals of his illustrious kinswoman, the celebrated Lady Mary Coke. There is a charm even in the bare title of these volumes. They constitute the "Open Sesame" to a world of pleasant things. Like the sound of the prompter's bell on the stage, the curtain rises and discloses a brilliant galaxy of wits, beauties, statesmen and men of pleasure, attired in the quaint and picturesque costume of the Georgian age. They have vanished from the busy scenes of this work-a-day world. They have been decently be-mourned. They have been reasonably forgotten. Let us in charity hope that after life's fitful fever they one and all sleep well.

Though Lady Coke's journals and letters contain much that relates only to politics and to diplomacy, they also contain the experiences of social life in various grades of English society and mingle with serious history the lighter chronicling of the airier things; or in other words, the manners of the men and women of a by-gone period. These for the most part have Lady Mary Coke for a central figure, and as she is by no means an unimportant one, we cannot do better than endeavour with the aid of these two volumes to give our readers some description of her.

She was the youngest daughter of John, Duke of Argyll and Greenwich, by his second wife, Jane Warburton, and was born on February 6, 1726. While still young her beauty gained her many admirers, although there was on the point considerable diversity of opinion. "Some allowed it, some denied it; the dissenters declaring her neither more nor less than a white cat—a creature to which her dead whiteness of skin, unshaded by eyebrows, and the fierceness of her eyes did give her a great resemblance." It is undeniable, however, that she possessed a tall commanding presence, beautiful teeth, a handsome neck, comely arms and hands, and to crown all an agreeable smile. Graces such as these, it must be allowed, cover a multitude of sins. Strict regard for veracity compels us to admit that Lady Mary was not altogether without spot and blemish. Undeniably clever, she was invariably wrong-headed. As her kinswoman Lady Louisa Stuart said of her many years after she had paid the debt of nature, "her understanding lay smothered under

so much pride, self-conceit, prejudice, obstinacy and violence of temper, that you knew not when to look for the cleverness, and seldom indeed did you catch such a distinct view of it as certified its existence." But having drawn these frailties of Lady Mary from their dread abode, we are bound to add that she possessed many sterling qualities, though these unfortunately were usually obscured like as the sky by a cloud. She was religious, she was sincere, she was perfectly honourable, she was good-natured when passion did not step in, she was even generous and charitable, though we fear we must add that her generosity was displayed principally in early life, and "before old age had sharpened economy into avarice." Considering the deplorable state of education in the eighteenth century, Lady Mary was well read and well informed. Unlike many ladies of high degree in this our day, her literary fare did not consist of every trashy novel supplied by the circulating library. Far from it. When we say that she was well versed in English history and state papers, that she esteemed very highly the poetry of Milton and of Pope, that she had studied the writings of Swift and Rapin, that she had swallowed large doses of Burnet and Burke, that she delighted in parliamentary journals, because she considered them the most authentic, that she was proficient in Rushworth's "Collections" and other works, the very sight of which would positively suffice to give many a damsel of the present day a fit of the blues, it may readily be inferred that Lady Mary's head was of no common order, and that he or she whose learning was "sadly to seek," would not have relished the prospect of sitting next to her at dinner or of making one of her party at the tea table.

When Old Father Time, "that subtle thief of youth," had reminded Lady Mary's parents of the fact that she was nineteen years of age, the friends and relatives of Lord Edward Coke, the only son of the Earl of Leicester, thought that it was high time to make overtures to her family for her hand. After much delay the bargain was struck. For Lady Mary's twenty thousand pounds, the equivalent was to be a jointure of two thousand five hundred pounds per annum, and five hundred pounds as pin money. But the Duchess of Argyll was averse to the union. Lord Coke was not exactly what we should term a "nice" young man, not, at any rate, in the usual acceptation of the term "nice." He was fond of the bottle. He hated regular hours. The number of

his "loves" was not represented by unity. In short, at the very time he was paying his addresses to Lady Mary, he was engaged as busily as he could be in sowing his wild oats. Cognizant of all this as Lady Mary was, she decided to accept him. She was not a person to be trifled with. When once she had made up her mind she was inflexible. The conveyancers proceeded to their work. Lord Coke was freely admitted to her presence. Yet in spite of this her ladyship manifested "all the outward and visible signs of a coyness approaching to aversion." Her lover dutifully took his place at her mother's tea table. He listened attentively to her long stories. He conversed most admirably on morality and propriety, keeping his countenance all the while. Every now and then he lowered his voice to its lowest tone, and tenderly addressed his lady love. But she, "bridling with ineffable disdain, turned away her head and hardly vouchsafed him an answer." Lord Coke bore this nonsense very good-humouredly, inwardly resolving to pay her out for it all when she became his own. Nor had he long to wait. With feigned reluctance the damsel at last consented to accompany her swain to the altar, where the marriage ceremony was duly performed.

Lady Mary Coke was married in April, 1747, and her marriage proved the reverse of a happy one, seeing that the ceremony was no sooner consummated than Lord Coke almost immediately renewed his former habits of gaming and drinking, lost no opportunity of attacking her father's memory, of ridiculing her mother, of disparaging the name of Campbell, and of slyly throwing out whatever else could irritate her most. "You will inquire how she bore such treatment. Why, her lawyers answered the question. They set forth that she ever comported herself in a courteous and obliging manner; she, they said (Lady Mary), being of 'a sober, modest, chaste and virtuous disposition,' which perforce reminds one of the meek spirit ascribed to Humphry Hoen's wife (Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough), in Arbuthnot's 'History of John Bull.' But we must remember that the said Lady Mary's teeth and claws were not already grown; besides, people who, like her, fairly love a grievance always support real evils better than those fabricated by their own imagination. As heroic sufferers they are in their proper element; it is exactly the character they aspire to exhibit, and so it inspires them with a sort of self-satisfaction calculated to produce apparent equa-

nimity.* Three months after their marriage, the young couple accompanied Lord and Lady Leicester to Holkham, where they were to pass the summer. It had been arranged that the family should travel together, and this led to an important discovery. When the driver of the Leicesters' coach and six drew up at Lord Coke's door early in the morning, Lady Mary was dressed and ready. Her lord, however, had not yet returned from the tavern. Then it was that Lord Leicester found that this was by no means an unusual occurrence, and fired with indignation that it should be so, Lord Leicester took Lady Mary's part in the warmest manner possible. That, of course, highly incensed the wayward Lord Coke. To be treated as a mere boy was far too much for him. He resolved to treat his wife with still greater disdain. The consequence was that after their visit had terminated, and the ill-assorted couple had returned to London, they lived upon worse terms than ever, "and in consequence of their declared quarrel she received a most flattering letter from his father at the commencement of the new year, extolling her as an angel and calling her husband a 'brute and beast' in express terms. The depraved wretch, who had proved himself unworthy of such a blessing as Heaven had granted him in her, should henceforth be renounced by him (Lord Leicester) and she (Lady Mary) regarded as his own beloved daughter married into another family."

Time rolled on. The breach continued to widen. Lady Mary vowed that she would never cohabit as wife with her lord. That vow she kept, with all her characteristic obstinacy. Seeing this, Lord Leicester, who before had been her friend, now became her enemy. Lady Mary being unwell went to reside for several months at her mother's house. Lord Coke, being also ill, resided with his parents, and often as he called to inquire after the state of her health, he was never admitted although other visitors were. Her nerves, she said, were far too weak to bear the agitation that an interview with her spouse would cause. In the meantime her uncle did all that he could to persuade Lord Leicester to let the miserable couple be formally separated. But the earl and his son both turned a deaf ear to the proposal. The couple went to Sunninghill, and from Sunninghill they

* Journal I., p. lxi.

went to Holkham, Lord Leicester's seat in Norfolk. There the earl and his son tried hard to tame the shrew. But the shrew was not to be tamed. For months she kept to her own apartment; refused, like Rachel to be comforted, and declined, in spite of the entreaties of her physician, to put foot outside the door. In March, 1749, Lord Coke absented himself. Before doing so, however, he empowered his father, by a letter of attorney, to take certain strong measures, which they had beforehand agreed upon between them. Lady Mary's maid was to be dismissed without warning. Her place was to be supplied by another of their own choice. Lady Mary was to be removed from the new house at Holkham into the adjoining old one. Strict orders were given to the domestics to deny access to any of her relations who attempted to visit her. For nearly six months Lady Mary lived in this state of persecution and imprisonment. She found means, however, notwithstanding, thanks to the servants, the apothecary and the chaplain, to correspond with her family. The Duchess of Argyll became furious, and at length, accompanied by a friend named Mackenzie and a solicitor, went to Holkham, and demanded, before witnesses, to have access to her daughter. Access was stoutly refused. Burning with anger the duchess returned to town, made affidavit of the fact, and obtained from the judges of the King's Bench a writ of *habeas corpus*, enjoining Lord Coke to produce his wife before them on the first day of term in November. November soon came. Lady Mary was brought up to London, swore the peace against her husband, and instituted a suit for divorce on the score of cruel usage. The Chief Justice declared that she was under the protection of the court in the interim, and ordered that her near relations, her lawyers and her physicians should be allowed unrestricted access to her presence. "I have often and often heard," says the Lady Louisa Stuart, "my mother describe the ceremony of Lady Mary's public appearance. The court was crowded to excess, the bench filled with ladies, for the duchess and her daughters not only assembled those related to them, but engaged all the most respectable of their acquaintance to countenance her by attending. Her male kindred and friends assisted likewise. On the other hand, Lord Leicester and his son, having no great interest with respectable women, gathered together a numerous posse of lively, clever, wild young men; all the rakes

and all the geniuses of the age came to back Lord Coke, or rather to enjoy an exhibition in their eyes very diverting. Lady Mary's faction found it far otherwise; the poor old duchess was crying bitterly, Lady Strafford repeatedly fainting away, and my mother said she never saw a more moving scene in any tragedy. If one durst form such a surmise, perhaps it distressed her and the rest of the troop more than it really did the chief actress; for I cannot but suspect that there was something in the dignity and solemnity of the transaction wonderfully consonant to Lady Mary's inclinations. However, she came forth, feeble, squalid, and in a wretched plight, dressed almost in tatters, which (by the way) the Leicesters maintained that it was her good pleasure to wear, since her pin money had never been withheld, and she had spent it as she thought proper. I should wrong you greatly by omitting one incident. The mob, which was prodigious, pressing to gain a sight of her, broke the glass of her sedan chair. 'Take care,' said the tender husband, as he handed her out of it. '*My dearest love! Take care and do not hurt yourself!*'"

During the time that the suit was pending Lady Mary Coke fixed her abode in a garret of Lord Leicester's town house, declaring that her friends would provide her with no better accommodation. Lord Leicester and his son stoutly declared that her ladyship perversely preferred it to any other in order to make out that she was cruelly used. Day after day her friends and her solicitors mounted up to her retreat, notwithstanding its inconvenient height, to extort from her the information requisite for forming the base of their proceedings. A difficult task it was. "Never was any human creature treated as I have been," pathetically whined Lady Mary. "That we do not doubt, madam," responded the lawyers; "but the law requires of us proof. We must go upon specific grounds. Will you please to enter into particulars?" "It is enough to say that in every respect my usage was most barbarous." "But how and in what precise respect? Cannot your ladyship state some one act on some one day?" "Oh! a thousand acts every day." And so the conversation went on, ending in nothing. What the gentlemen of the long robe said to each other as they descended the staircase is not recorded, but it is not difficult to guess.

That Lord Coke had once struck her on the arm and had torn her lace ruffle—that Lord Leicester had once talked of sending

her to the hundreds of Essex or some place equally unwholesome—that Lord Coke, having once found her deep in the perusal of Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, had told her that she could not understand a word of it, and had called her “an affected bitch”—that Lord Leicester had once told her that she was a piece of useless lumber, fit only to be locked up in a garret out of the way—these were the principal counts in the indictment or memorial which poor Lady Mary Coke addressed to the spiritual court. Well may Lady Louisa Stuart observe that “if the judges preserved their gravity on hearing it repeated, they did all that decency could demand of mortal men.” What did the stiff legal document prove? Nothing more than she had, in common parlance, “caught a tartar” for a husband, a matter of every-day experience in that age as in this.

The result was that the matter fell through, as it deserved to do. Lady Mary was left to the tender mercies of her enemies. If her spouse and his father had not felt tired of the game they were playing, Lady Mary would assuredly have had no alternative but to return to her prison, or to take the wings of the morning and to flee into the uttermost parts of the sea. Lord Hartington, afterwards Duke of Devonshire, came forward as the peacemaker. Yielding to his persuasions the Leicesters consented to allow Lady Mary Coke to reside unmolested at Sudbrook Park, in Surrey, on condition that she should withdraw her suit, bear all the expenses, never set her foot in town, and have no separate maintenance except her pin money. Hard as these terms were they were mild in comparison with those which they had at first dictated—namely, on no pretence to come within twenty miles of the capital, and publicly to acknowledge in open court that her grievances had been utterly groundless!

Who shall tell the relief which Lady Mary Coke experienced, some three years after she had separated from her husband, on learning that his excesses and debaucheries had been instrumental in providing him with a passport into that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns? Who indeed? Lord Coke's earthly existence terminated in 1753. His wife never married again. She wore mourning and forsook the amusements of the world for the usual space of time, and this “decent behaviour” did much to conciliate the Leicester family. But in secret everybody rejoiced at her deliverance. “At six and

twenty," says Lady Louisa Stuart, "she emerged from a very dull retirement, a state of constant humiliation and fear, into the perfect freedom of an independent widow, with a jointure of twenty-five hundred pounds a year, fully equivalent to what five thousand pounds would be at present." Before long rumours became current of her espousal. One set of gossips declared that a marriage was being arranged for her with young Jack Campbell of Mamore, the heir to the dukedom of Argyll. Another set of gossips declared that she was about to marry Lord March, the most notorious profligate and debauchee of the age, a man whose business was pleasure, whose passions were women, whose pastime was the turf, and who contrived to gratify each without impairing either his fortune or his constitution. He succeeded his cousin in the earldom of Queensberry in 1778, being then in his seventy-third year, and was for ever afterwards familiarly known as "Old Q." Few men of his day acquired greater notoriety, or were more an object of inquiry and speculation. Probably no man held in greater contempt the marriage tie. Nor can we doubt that if Lady Mary Coke had been so ill advised as to give her hand in marriage to him, polite society would have been scandalized and once more set by the ears. The real object of Lady Mary Coke, however, was to connect herself with the court, and this she eventually contrived to do, by means of an acquaintance with the Princess Amelia or Emily, George the Second's daughter, and that of the person her Royal Highness most disliked, the king's declared mistress, Lady Yarmouth, "a quiet, orderly, well-behaved, well-bred, honest German ; long past her youth, and without the least pretension to wit or beauty." A close friendship which struck up between these two was terminated only by the death of George the Second and by Lady Yarmouth going abroad. When, or how, it originated does not precisely appear, but it is certain that a very strong intimacy soon sprang up between Lady Mary Coke and Edward Duke of York, an amiable young man, barely twenty years of age. Lady Mary, although twelve years his senior, looked graciously upon the stripling. She addressed the prince, we are told, "still more respectfully than Lord Orford ; but tempered her respect with all the attractive smiles and graces which could make the handsome young man feel himself flattered by the handsome woman courtesying so particularly low to him. . . . Lady Mary, having a

reverend care of her reputation, kept upon high ground ; admitted his Royal Highness's visits but sparingly, and wholly avoided any suspicious familiarity. In consequence his letters abounded with complaints of the prudish strictness that holds him so far aloof, and inspires him with such awe that he hardly dares hazard the most innocent expressions for fear of being misunderstood, and giving her nicety needless alarm." The flirtation was productive of much amusement. The disparity of age, the haughty demeanour of Lady Coke, the pompous epistles of the duke, were very curious. At last the duke began to quiz Lady Mary, made light of her pomposity, "of the awful reserve and the distant encouragement held out by turns, and more than all, of her evident intention to become his wife." In these circumstances, it is not a little difficult to conceive how the gossips could ever have had the assurance to declare that the Duke of York and Lady Mary Coke were secretly married. They did do so, notwithstanding, and they were never more greatly deceived, seeing that the last letter Lady Mary ever received from the duke was dated Rome, 1764, and inscribed "Your affectionate friend Edward." A most matter-of-fact epistle it was. Sentiment found no place in it, and, as Lady Louisa ably remarks, "Any gentleman might have addressed it to any lady, young or old, or even to one of his own sex." The Duke of York died at Monaco in 1767. Lady Mary Coke on learning the sad news was very grieved, and there is reason to believe that her grief was also very sincere. The duke's body was brought to England, for interment in Westminster Abbey. The poor grief-stricken Lady Mary, as soon as the funeral obsequies had been performed, descended into the vault, attended by Colonel Morrison, groom of the duke's bedchamber, and, kneeling down, shed copious floods of tears beside the coffin. The fashionable world hearing of this scene laughed at it, and made many uncomplimentary remarks concerning it, which it was perhaps as well for her peace of mind that Lady Mary was not privileged to overhear. We may add that for several years her ladyship constantly repeated her visits to the duke's remains whenever the opening of the royal vault or the demise of a prince or princess gave her an opportunity of doing so ; but all her numerous friends and acquaintances were supposed to understand that the hallowed fane in which they rested was never to be named or alluded to in her presence.

Lady Louisa Stuart tells an amusing story of the first interview between the Princess Emily and Lady Mary Coke after the Duke of York's death. The former neither felt concern, nor was disposed to feign it. The latter, after pulling a face as long as a fiddle, burst into tears. "Dear Lady Mary," said the princess wickedly, "do not make yourself so miserable *about my sister*"—her sister the Landgravine of Hesse-Cassel was then seriously indisposed—"I assure you my accounts of her are quite satisfactory." At this point the tears flowed faster than ever. "Nay, but surely you may trust me; I am not in the least uneasy now. By yesterday's post I received a letter from herself to say how fast she was recovering." But Lady Mary was dead to all these broad hints, and sobbed forth the name of the dear departed. "My good Lady Mary," burst forth the princess, "if you did but know what a joke he always used to make of you, I promise you you would soon have done crying for him." Lady Mary did not like that speech at all, and in order to show her what his sentiments had really been, sent her all his notes and letters. Back they came not long afterwards with a note remarkable for its brevity: "*I thank you for the letters, which I return, and wish I could prevail on you to burn them all.—Amelia.*"

The years sped on. A new generation sprang up which was stubborn and rebellious. All Lady Mary's old-fashioned notions were shaken to their very foundations by two events in high life—the marriages of the Dukes of Cumberland and Gloucester with plebeians. Present-day folk can form but a very faint conception of the shock that Lady Mary must have experienced. She, a real lady of high degree, a lady having the blood of Campbell flowing in her veins, a Dowager Duchess of York, at the least in her own opinion, if not in that of her friends, to be passed over as if she never existed; and to behold the illegitimate daughter of a baronet, by a mistress who if report spoke truly had been taken from the top of a dust cart, step into the proud position of Duchess of Gloucester; and to behold the widow Horton, whose father, Simon Luttrell, had been the greatest reprobate in England, step into the equally proud position of Duchess of Cumberland, it was really too dreadful! We wonder how Lady Mary could ever have survived it. Some consolation was perhaps afforded her by the thought that the king was so highly incensed at the conduct of his brothers as to forbid them to come into his

presence, and publicly to notify that all who frequented their courts would be refused admittance to Saint James's.

We can well imagine that a country in which such iniquities could be perpetrated, much less tolerated, soon became odious in the eyes of Lady Mary. She sighed for some land of pure delight, where saints and angels reigned. Shaking off the dust of English soil from her feet, she embarked for the Continent, inwardly flattering herself, no doubt, that a lady who possessed so strict a regard for the proprieties of social life would not fail to be received with open arms at every court she visited. Alas! never was woman more cruelly deceived in this respect than Lady Mary Coke.

Reaching Berlin, in order to pay her respects to Frederick of Prussia, she was much mortified to find that august personage of set purpose, not only invisible, but inaccessible. At Vienna she met with a slightly better reception. The British envoy, Sir Robert Murray Keith, introduced her to the Emperor Joseph and the Empress, and to all the notabilities of the court. Her stay was a delightful one, so delightful indeed that she felt many a pang at parting. From Vienna she went to Tyrol, and from Tyrol into Italy, where she met with a very cold reception. Then she made up her mind to visit the court of France. But the young king and queen accorded hardly any welcome worthy of the name to Lady Mary at Versailles. "In those days one of the unfortunate Queen Mary Antoinette's chief sins appears to have been a want of attention to that resentful part of the creation, old women, and consequent disregard of all the forms, etiquettes, decorums, and such observances which old women value and recommend—not always unwisely as her melancholy history may prove."

Heartily sick of visiting the courts of Europe, and firmly convinced that they were all degenerate, Lady Mary sought once more the land of her birth, not, however, without having first caused a breach between herself and Horace Walpole at Paris. Lady Mary Coke never went abroad again. She fixed her abode in London, where sad it is to relate that it became her lot "to stoop from braving the enmity of empresses and queens, and to live to dread the revenge of John and Betty, leagued with an atrocious cheesemonger," a state of affairs over which we willingly draw a veil.

Her domestics were always quitting her service, and it is not

surprising that they did, since we are told that they were a set of ragamuffins who for want of a character could get no other place. To one, however, named Claire, a handsome female mulatto from the French West Indies, Lady Mary Coke became much attached. This attachment the cunning slave repaid by frequently stopping out rather late in the evening "to see a sick friend," and being "suddenly sent for by a San Domingo cousin," so often that it became at last a standing joke with the watchmen of Berkeley Square. We may mention that after quitting Lady Mary's service, this mulatto was lost sight of for fifteen years. At the expiration of that period she appeared as the favourite sultana of Sir Henry Englefield! An interminable war with the domestics, who kept their mistress in constant alarm for her throat and her casket of jewels, a keen interest in the affairs of the nation, about the government of which she took more trouble than the cabinet council, and an even keener interest in all that related to the fashionable world, we may be perfectly sure that Lady Mary Coke did not find the time hang very heavily on her hands; but in the meantime much was happening. Old fashions were changing, yielding place to new ones. This naturally caused her much vexation of spirit. In spite of protests, arguments and harangues, the wearing of sacques, hoops, and all the other parts of ladies' attire, were one after the other laid aside. All these signs of change reminded Lady Mary that she was no longer youthful, and contributed greatly to sour a temper at the best by no means a sweet one.

Things went on from bad to worse, till at length, in 1781, she quarrelled with the Princess Amelia, her oldest friend, and as the incident is described so admirably by Lady Louisa Stuart, we shall make no apology for quoting it in its entirety:

"Lady Mary sate down to cards one evening in a mood of superlative perverseness; sought occasions to squabble, found fault with the princess's play, laughed her assertions to scorn, and finally got a very sharp reply for her pains. In lieu of recollecting herself, she took fire, and retorted more sharply still. The princess declined further altercation, with an air that said, 'I remember who I am,' and the company gazed at each other in silence. When the party broke up, Lady Mary departed unspoken to, and all concluded that she would be admitted into that house no more. But Princess Emily gave her fairer play than

they expected. She desired to see her alone, and calmly entered upon a good-humoured expostulation. 'We are such old friends,' said she, 'that it really is too foolish to fall out and part about a trifle; but you must be conscious you were very provoking the other night. As I lost my temper too, I am the readier to forgive; only say you are sorry, and I will never think of it again.' Here was a noble opportunity to display unyielding firmness of character. Lady Mary drew herself up to her utmost height, and answered with all the dignity of Charles the First at his trial, or Algernon Sidney confronting Judge Jeffreys: 'Madam, I respect your Royal Highness as I ought; my loyalty to your illustrious house has been sufficiently proved; my attachment to your person is beyond dispute; but I cannot give up my integrity and honour. I cannot retract the opinions I have once delivered, while I continue persuaded they are just. Your Royal Highness yourself would be entitled to despise me did I act so meanly. I am no sycophant—no flatterer; adulation will never flow from me.' 'Pooh! pshaw! nonsense!' cried the princess, interrupting her. 'Where's the use of all these heroics about nothing? Who wants you to retract, and flatter, and I know not what? Can't you say, as I say myself, that you are concerned for this very silly business, and so let us be friends?' 'No, madam, my honour—honour, which is dearer to me than life—' and then followed another tirade. After one or two more vain endeavours to bring her down from her stilts, the other rose to *her* full height likewise, and assuming all the king's daughter, 'Well, madam,' she said, 'your ladyship knows your own pleasure best. I wish you health and happiness for the future, and at present a good morning. Here,' to the page in waiting, 'order Lady Mary Coke's carriage;' then gravely bowing in token of dismissal, turned away. From that moment they never met again. The loss was altogether Lady Mary's, and also the mortification. This she betrayed by a constant fidgeting anxiety to know whatever passed at Princess Emily's parties, who came and who went, and what her Royal Highness said or did. The princess survived their final rupture but two or three years."

Concerning the closing years of Lady Mary's earthly existence little remains to be told. When "the First Gentleman in Europe," whom she had known from an infant, came to man's estate, his behaviour occupied much of her attention, and that his vagaries

and gallantries were viewed by her with a favourable eye it would be going too far to suppose. Nor is it surprising to learn that when the Heir-Apparent bestowed his affections upon Mrs. Fitzherbert, "it went near to wake the old Gloucester and Cumberland fever rage in her veins anew." Other important events tried her equanimity sorely. The animated debates on the regency question, the influence which the French Revolution exerted on the lower orders of English society, the utter contempt with which the democracy treated crowns, thrones and coronets, filled her with alarm. But she was now considered "an extinct volcano," and her ebullitions of wrath attracted the attention of none.

The eighteenth century rolled away, the nineteenth century dawned, and still Lady Mary Coke tarried in the land of the living. But the end was not far off, and early on the morning of September 30th, 1811, the solemn tones of the bell of Chiswick church proclaimed to the world that her spirit had passed away into that rest which it had never known upon earth. Like Sir Condry Rackrent in Miss Edgeworth's romance, Lady Mary Coke had survived her own wake, and had been permitted to overhear the calm, dispassionate judgment of posterity. In that great temple of silence and reconciliation, where the enmities of twenty generations lie buried, where every foot-fall wakes the voice of ages, and where, more than forty years previously, all that was mortal of the Duke of York had been laid to rest, it was very meet and right that the bones of so illustrious a personage as Lady Mary Coke should be permitted to mingle with their parent earth, and so in the Argyll vault in Henry the Seventh's chapel in Westminster Abbey, among a long line of illustrious ancestors, her body was buried in peace.

It is now high time to turn to Lady Mary's journal, and in so doing let us say that its value is vastly enhanced by an admirable introduction from the pen of Lady Louisa Stuart, daughter of the Earl of Bute, minister of George the Third. It was written for the purpose of giving to Lady Scott an account of her grandfather John, Duke of Argyll, in 1827 at Ditton Park. Lady Louisa was born in 1757, and died unmarried in 1851 in Gloucester Place at the ripe old age of ninety-four. Unfortunately, though constantly engaged in writing throughout her long life, the greater part of her papers were destroyed by her own directions. We are thankful for what we have. Lady Louisa,

we are sure, must have been a most accomplished and amiable woman, and to have enjoyed the privilege of her acquaintance must have been a liberal education. It is evident that she possessed a true genius for narration, a quality which will always stand first among literary gifts, and we cannot doubt that had her recollections of her times been published, they would have entitled her to the highest rank in the world of letters.

After Lady Mary Coke had separated from her husband, she resided with her mother chiefly at Sudbrook, near Richmond, in Surrey. Her journal, which was written in the form of a weekly or semi-weekly letter, and addressed, sometimes to Lady Dalkeith, but more frequently to Lady Strafford, was commenced on August 18th, 1766, and was continued till 1791. It is, in effect, a private news letter, and does not seem to have been composed with a view to future publication. We shall now make some excerpts. Under date of August 25th, 1766, we catch a glimpse of the childhood of the Prince of Wales, afterwards George the Fourth: "Before ten o'clock, dressed myself, intending to call on Lady Charlotte Finch,* at Kew, before I went to Gunnersbury.† Set out at once, found Lady Charlotte at home, and the Prince of Wales and his brothers going to dinner; he desired me to sit by the table, but said he did not like his dinner, as it was not his meat day; when it was over he made me go upstairs and play with him, till it grew so late I told H.R.H. I must go. He asked me where I was going to; I said to his aunt, the Princess Amelia. He then looked at me and said, 'Pray, are you well enough dress'd to visit her?' I told him I hoped she wou'd think so; he then order'd my servants to be called & said he wou'd go downstairs with me; stopped me again in the hall & in a low voice asked me if it was Princess Amelia's *meat* day. I can assure you he is the most comical child I ever saw." We may mention that the Prince of Wales was born in August, 1762, and consequently at this time was only four years of age. Lady Mary at this time saw much of Horace Walpole. Thursday, June 4th, 1766, she writes, "I dress'd myself for the whole day before breakfast, as he *was* to go at eleven o'clock to Strawberry Hill. Mr. Mackenzie did not go; I carried Mrs. Yonge, and Ly. Betty went by herself. When we came to Richmond ferry, the

*Governess of the royal children. †Princess Amelia's country house.

ladies wou'd go in a little boat ; I accompanied them out of complaisance, for you well know I have no fears. Strawberry Hill looked in great beauty, but Mr. Walpole was not well, complain'd of pains all over him, & was to go to town in the evening ; while we was there he received a note from his neighbour, Mrs. Clive,* to invite him to dine with her to-morrow upon a haunch of venison. He has a bullfinch that whistles an entire tune without stopping, and beginning again, two or three times over, like yours. Don't be displeased, for yours are certainly not so clever." Complaints are frequently expressed nowadays by regular church-goers, of the mumbling by the clergy both of the liturgy and the sermon. People were accustomed to this sort of thing, it seems, in the days of George the Third, for says Lady Mary, under date of Sunday, September 7th, 1766, "At eleven we went to church. The clergyman spoke so low, we did not hear above one word in ten ; the length of his sermon was very reasonable, but what the doctrine was I can't tell you." In those days too, people hesitated to stir a mile from their doors after dark through fear of being robbed and even murdered, therefore we are not surprised to find it chronicled that on one occasion "Madame de Welderen came from London & returned at half an hour past nine o'clock, tho' there are robberies every night."

In October, 1766, Lady Mary Coke went to Bath, and her gossip of that gossiping place, of course, fills many pages of her journal. Here is an account of the way in which she passed the first Sunday in the month of November: "Got up about nine o'clock. At half an hour after went to the Abbey Church, & heard a very good Sermon preached for the benefit of the Charity Children of that Corporation. Gave half a guinea as I went out, and walked to Mrs. Granville's, where I stay'd an hour, then came home and dress'd, being to return my visits. The Duchess of Bedford sent me word She wou'd come to me at seven o'clock ; order'd my Chair in consequence at half an hour after five, that I might be back in time ; found only Lady Trevor at home. She told me She heard there was going to be made four barr . . ." [*sic*, in MS. Lady Mary was probably doubtful as to how many r's there were in the word "baronet."] "I then return'd home, & the Duke & Duchess of Bedford came to me & staid till a little

* The celebrated actress.

after eight. When they were gone I set out again to make visits, & ended with Lady Rockingham; She had been so good to be with me again on Saturday Night. She seems, I think, to be perfectly well, & has never look'd in such beauty since the first year of her Marriage. She had three birds which She had purchased since She had been at Bath. She told me she always found herself more at home with a bird in her room, so She had brought three. I staid with her till within a quarter of ten, came home & sat with the General till near eleven but eat nothing."

Deep as was the interest that Lady Mary Coke took in the fashionable world, it had not the effect of shutting up her compassion from the desolate and the oppressed, or from providing for the sick and needy in their affliction. Several passages in the journal show that Lady Mary Coke in this respect was possessed of a large heart and of a most generous disposition. Much faith was, in that age, placed in dreams. Lord Drumlanrig, eldest son of the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, was killed by the discharge of his pistol in 1754, a few months after his marriage with Lady Elizabeth Hope. Curiously enough Lady Mary Coke had dreamed of the occurrence long before it came to pass. In February, 1767, she happened to be visiting Lady Aylesbury. "After supper," she says, "the conversation turn'd upon dreams. All agreed it was a weakness to give too much attention to them, & yet it was acknowledged that many people had dreamt events that afterwards had been very exactly verified. Ly. Ailesbury said She had heard of my having dreamt of the melancholy event that had happen'd in the Duke of Queensberry's family a little time before it happened, which I related to several people the next morning. I said it was very true, & that I had had several other dreams that had proved as true. We all agreed to tell the dreams we shou'd have that night the next time we mett."

As in those times scarcely any one could be found who was not occasionally intoxicated, and when the inability of a gentleman to consume two or even three bottles of wine at a single sitting brought him into contempt, we are not surprised to learn that one evening in 1767, while Lady Mary was at the opera, "Ld. Barrymore came in quite drunk & behaved in a very extraordinary manner." We are not exaggerating when we say that there is scarcely a single page of Lady Coke's journal which does not

bear its testimony to the fierceness with which the mania for gambling raged among polite society in England during the first half of the reign of George the Third. No matter where the journal is opened the eye is certain to rest upon a notification of some sum of money lost or won at cards. Under date of Tuesday, June 2, 1767, we read: "At eight I went to Lady Holderness . . . Four rooms were open but not many people; three tables however at Lu, & I won four & forty guineas." A few days later Lady Mary made one of Mrs. Pitt's party at Kensington, where she lost ten guineas at loo. At the Duchess of Norfolk's, at Hammersmith, not many days later, she lost three guineas. "In the evening I went to the Duchess of Grafton, where there was to be two tables at Lu. It began late. The Duchess and I sat by ourselves till half an hour after nine. Lady Jane Scott won near sixty guineas. My fortune was more moderate: I won four guineas and a half."

Lady Mary Coke was very fastidious in the matter of diet, and ability to set before her a dainty dish was a sure passport to her good graces. Woe unto them who did not do so! Lady Blandford once gave her deep offence by the dinner she served. The company arrived shortly after three. "I never saw her have a worse dinner," wrote Lady Mary the next day; "a great round of boiled beef, little mutton pyes, & two other little things not meat. You know I am not difficult, & yet I was at a loss to make my dinner. Boiled beef is a good thing, but a dish I seldom eat, & little mutton pyes are too savory for me; beans I hate, & mackerel without fennel sauce I can't eat; judge then if I made a good dinner. In the evening She made me take a walk with her in the garden; her chief purpose seem'd to be to advise me to marry. She said people had first, second, & third springs, & that if I did not marry soon well, She was sure I should marry in the end ill. I ask'd her why she thought so; she reply'd with some quickness, because I might do a silly thing as well as other people. I told her I had as yet given her no reason to think so, but her answer was, She depended upon nobody. We play'd afterwards at Quadrille, & at half an hour after eight I came away & stopped at Lady Charlotte Burgoyne's, where I had been invited to a party at Lu. I had much better have gone home, for I was not much amused & lost sixteen guineas and a half."

In 1767 Lady Mary took up her abode in a house at Notting

Hill, near Bayswater, at that time a secluded village, desolate, lonely, and unsafe. Of the life at this "country seat," as she calls it, we read many pages. They who know Notting Hill as it is, with its stately squares, its fine crescents and its prim terraces, may well be excused a sigh as they reflect upon what it must have been like in the second half of the eighteenth century. In one place Lady Mary Coke makes the following entry: "Friday, Sept. 20, 1767.—The Weather tho' not what it was in this month last year, by twelve O'clock is very fine; till then the great dues, & sometimes a good deal of fog, makes it unpleasant. The Man has been with me again about the alterations in my Garden, but we have not quite agreed; to-morrow I am to determine. In a Walk now overgrown with rubbish, & which I propose making fine, I have to-day cut *a view of Hampstead and Highgate*, & intend having a bench. I do assure you the prospect everywhere is delightful, & when it is in a little order I think you will admire it."

Very numerous are the expressions of regret to which Lady Mary Coke gives vent in her journal for October, 1767, at the death of the Duke of York. "I was not born to be happy," she remarks pathetically in one place, "& the same ill fortune that attended me early in life attends me now." "In the evening I fancy'd I heard the firing of Cannon, but I believe it was only imagination. Guns and tolling of Bells are for ever in my ears." "In the Evening I was worse than usual. I cou'd not read any time together. I pray'd to God to assist me to bear as I ought the seeing myself deprived of every expectation of happiness in this world. I was afterwards more composed." Then follows another entry to this effect: "*Saturday*.—I have passed a terrible night; cou'd not sleep any time together; yet four times I dream'd the same dream. I thought I was in Westminster Abbey, & the funeral service was performing for the poor Duke, that I had not resolution to go into the Chapel, but sat down on a Tomb in another part of the Abbey, when I thought the figures on the Monuments moved. I then seemed to be left alone, & fancy'd I was shut up, but on walking down one of the great Isles I saw a door open, which I went out, & was then perplexed walking about the streets. My mind was so disturb'd that I rose early & went into my garden, stay'd out till twelve O'clock, then came in, dressed, and went to Gunnersbury."

Our readers will doubtless have noticed in many of the foregoing citations from the journal that Lady Mary's orthography is occasionally very defective. In the eighteenth century this blemish was almost universal among people of rank, as their published correspondence amply testifies. And even King George the Third himself, in the letters that he addressed to his ministers, contracted words and slipped into ill-spelling now and then.

The two volumes before us carry Lady Mary Coke's journal only down as far as 1768, and it is hoped that the publication of it will be continued at least as far as Lady Mary's last visit to Vienna in 1774. The editor has judged, in our opinion most rightly, that as one of the objects in printing the journal was its preservation, it is better that it should be given entire rather than in fragments. The printing and the binding of these sumptuous quartos leave nothing to be desired, and we close them not without returning our hearty thanks to the Earl of Home for the gratification which the perusal of them has afforded us.

WILLIAM CONNOR SYDNEY.

"Attached to the Regiment."

A SHORT STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

By DAISY PENDER CUDLIP.

CHAPTER I.

"It's about as bad a case as I've met with. Poor chap, he doesn't stand much chance of a recovery. I've just spoken to the colonel and told him he really ought to let the mother know ; if she wants to see her son alive she must come at once. Cameron hasn't many days to live, unless I'm very much mistaken."

Surgeon McLean, attached to the —th Highlanders, was the speaker, and his usually sunny Irish eyes wore a troubled expression, for the man whom he had just pronounced to be beyond recovery was the most popular man in the regiment, and their pride in all things that called for pluck and endurance. In fact, it was this very attribute which brought him to his present pass. A fearless, plucky rider to hounds, he had come to grief, no one exactly knew how, but was discovered insensible under the lifeless body of his horse, which had evidently been strangled in its futile endeavours to get free of the barbed wire fence in which it was caught.

Captain Cameron was carried back on a shutter to barracks, where he had remained ever since, with concussion of the brain, caused by a kick from his struggling horse, and a dislocated shoulder.

For two or three days his condition was considered serious, but by no means hopeless. Then, however, fever set in, and Captain Cameron, the usually strong, robust man, was reduced to a state of utter weakness that was pitiful to see. Before, he had been wildly delirious, but now an occasional moan of pain was the only sound or sign of life that escaped from his parched lips. The usually cheery Irish doctor and the hospital nurse shook their heads ominously, and agreed that his people ought to be sent for at once. Accordingly the colonel had been told, and he wired to London for Mrs. Cameron to come without delay, if she wished to see her son alive.

The news that Archie Cameron was actually dying came as a thunderbolt upon his brother officers, as they were assembled in groups in the ante-room after mess for somehow the idea of death and Archie Cameron seemed so utterly incongruous that they failed to grasp it; but when McLean said that there was small chance of his recovery, then, indeed, things looked bad, and an air of gloom settled over the community, till one by one they left the ante-room. Each was filled with sadness at the thought of losing a good comrade, and had no heart for the company of the others.

In a very short time the room was deserted, save for one man who sat on, his chin resting in his hand absorbed in thought, and apparently oblivious to all that went on around him; he sat on and on without moving, until the fire died down, and nothing remained but a dull red glow, which falling in with a thud, burnt up for a few moments and then gradually died out altogether. This roused the man from his sad thoughts with a start. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "and Archie will die, will just go out like that fire, and then—ugh"—with a shudder—"I can't bear to think of it. Oh, my friend, dear old friend, it is hard to lose you like this, you who have braved such hardships and dangers at Suakin to die in your bed, while I live on, a mere nothing compared to you. If only I could give my life for yours, I'd give it willingly; but it won't save you, old friend, so I shall just have to live on without you; but it's hard, cursed hard!" He was muttering these words, partly aloud and partly to himself, moving rapidly about the room, as a man is apt to do when under the influence of a strong emotion. Suddenly he stopped short at the window, and drawing aside the curtains, he looked across the parade to a window with a moving light that threw weird reflections on to the blind, and at intervals he could clearly distinguish the shadow of the nurse as she stood apparently bending over the sick man's bed. He stood watching as if fascinated, for how long he did not know, until the barrack clock slowly tolled out twelve strokes that seemed to strike him with horror, for he winced at each stroke as though it hurt him. As the last echo died away he turned sadly and listlessly from the room, and went across to his own quarters, where he determined to wait, for what he did not quite know; they might summon him at the last to see his friend, although now he was not allowed in the sick room for fear he

should excite or disturb the patient. "As if I would!" he muttered to himself. Meanwhile the telegram with its ominous summons had sped on its way, and Mrs. Cameron, prostrate with grief at the thought of losing her only son, seemed utterly incapable of doing anything in the emergency, but turned for support to the stronger character of her daughter Eleanor, commonly called Nell, who, although quite young, barely twenty, was fully able to justify the reliance placed in her.

"Come, mother dear, you must be brave for Archie's sake. Try to bear up until at least it is all over; but we require all our faculties about us if we are to be of any use or comfort to him."

"You do not understand what this means for me, child. Don't you know that he is dying? My boy Archie is dying, and nothing *we* can do will save him."

"Hush, mother, don't say that. I *know* he won't die. I feel somehow that our going may perhaps save him; at least I feel as if God is going to give him back to us, even from the very gate of death; but anyhow, all our strength will be required in nursing him back to life, so just you lie down, dear, and leave me to put up your things for you. You see we cannot possibly start until the early mail, and that is not till four in the morning; so in the meantime you really must rest."

Poor Nell, she tried to find comfort for herself in the hope that, at least, they might be in time to see Archie alive and be recognized by him. No, he could not, *must* not die, her darling idolized brother. Surely God will spare him to these two who love him so dearly; it cannot be that he is going to die; no, a thousand times, no. And so, in spite of the seeming hopelessness of the case, a new hope sprang up within her heart, and she began to plan in her mind how she would nurse him back to health and strength. Would the time never come for them to start? How the hours seemed to drag, while he, perhaps, was waiting, and longing for them to come. At last they were off, and hard work Nell had to prevent her mother from breaking down completely. Poor woman, she had accepted the worst, and nothing could persuade her to let in one ray of hope. However, Nell, in her endeavours to cheer her mother, had really firmly come to believe that Archie would not die; she felt he would pass through the crisis, until even Mrs. Cameron grew less despairing. The long, cold dreary journey was over at last, and securing a cab they drove straight

to the barracks through what seemed to them interminable dreary streets with a sea of mud in the roads, and to add to the dreariness of the picture, the rain was falling in that peculiarly soaking way that it acquires solely for the benefit of Plymouth. Truly the elements did not encourage feelings of hopefulness, and yet in spite of all Nell had an intuition that it would all end happily and Archie would recover.

Arrived at the Barrack Clock Tower the colonel was there to meet them ; he handed the ladies out of the cab with a very grave face, and in answer to the unspoken question in the anguished mother's face, he said :

"You are just in time, Mrs. Cameron. I fear he is sinking fast, but he is now quite conscious and has been asking for you and his sister. Will you follow me? This is the way."

"Take us to him quickly, Colonel Barry, for dear Archie's sake. Mother, don't break down ; you must try and bear up."

Just as they reached the bottom of the flight of steps leading to the sick man's quarters, a young fellow came headlong down, and apparently without seeing anything, nearly ran into the party as they were going up ; it was the same one who had watched the shadow on the blind the night before. He drew himself on one side for the ladies to pass, hoping they might not observe him, for there were traces of recent tears on his face—a handsome boyish face it was, although its owner was about six and twenty but looked younger. Colonel Barry and Mrs. Cameron did as he wished and walked on apparently unheeding, but Nell, looking up and seeing him, with the traces of sorrow on his face, an unaccountable impulse impelled her to hold out her hand and say, "You have seen Archie? Tell me, is he really going to die? I know who you are ; you are 'Damon.' Archie always spoke of you as his 'Damon,' so I do not know your real name. Forgive my speaking to you in this way, but we have a common sorrow, which, I think, excuses me."

"Excuses you! Miss Cameron, I'm very glad you have spoken to me ; and did he really call me 'Damon?' That is worth hearing, for he is my dearest friend on earth ; in fact, he has been everything to me. You see I am quite alone in the world, and, by the way, my name is Harold Ferris at your service. Poor old chap, he knew me just now, but—but, I'm afraid he is sinking. Go to him

quickly, but God bless you for giving a kind word to me, when your own heart must be nearly breaking."

With these words he pressed her hand to his lips and abruptly left her. Nellie hurriedly ran on until she came to the door with her brother's name on it, then quietly turning the handle she slipped in and made her way to the side of the bed where, falling on her knees by her mother's side, she stretched out her hands towards the sick man. He took no notice, his eyes were closed. Good God! her heart stood still; he was dying and too late to recognize them. An awful stillness pervaded the room, and wonderingly Nell, looking at the opposite wall, noticed that her photograph was framed together with one of the young fellow she had called "Damon." So often in the most agonizing moment of our lives do trifles strike us.

How long that ghastly stillness lasted she did not know; it may have been only a few seconds, it seemed like hours. Presently, however, the nurse stepped forward softly and, leaning over the bed, looked at her patient, then turning towards the two kneeling women she motioned them to go, and whispered, "He is asleep; if he can sleep on now we may pull him through, please God."

Slowly and with a dazed look the mother raised herself from her knees; she could not grasp the idea, for she had already thought he was dead, and now to hear that he was only asleep and that there was really hope of his recovery, could she believe the evidence of her senses? Yes, he was sleeping peacefully and breathing quietly and regularly. "Thank God, thank God," she murmured, then went from the room afraid to trust herself, for the reaction was too great, and if she broke down she might wake him up.

Nell, on the other hand, knelt on, praying as she had seldom prayed before; her whole heart went out in one unspoken song of gratitude to God; she could not form her prayers, but they were heartfelt.

Presently the nurse touched her lightly on the shoulder, and motioned to her to get up from her kneeling position, but she shook her head; if she moved now, she would be bound to shake the bed, for she was stiff and cramped and would have to cling to it to help her, so she knelt on, until all feeling seemed dead, but she did not notice it; all her energies were concentrated in watching her brother's face, for the first sign of awakening and

recognition. Worn out at last she must have fallen asleep, for when Harold Ferris came up not long afterwards to hear the latest news of his friend, he opened the door and found her fast asleep with her head resting on the bed. Assisted by the nurse he lifted her up from her cramped position and carried her to the sofa, where they laid her.

"Poor young lady, she's just worn out with anxiety ; however, we'll let her sleep on now for a bit, then she'll be all the more fit to greet her brother when he wakes up ; he's having a splendid sleep now, and, please God, we'll pull him through."

"Nurse, you are a brick to give me such good news ; but where is Mrs. Cameron ?"

"Oh ! the colonel's lady came and fetched her across to go and rest in their quarters until Captain Cameron wakes, when I have promised to send across to her. The great thing now is to let the captain sleep on as long as he can, the longer the better."

"Is there anything I can do for you, nurse ?"

"No, thank you, sir ; I should advise a little rest to yourself. If I'm any judge, I should say you have not had much sleep lately."

"Oh, I'm all right—never felt better in my life—now that the dear old chap is a bit better ; but I'll go for a turn, and tell the good news to every one I meet."

With which he went away, and was immediately joined by several of his brother officers, anxious to hear the latest bulletin. Sympathy was not limited to the officers by any means. Every man and boy in the regiment rejoiced at the good news, for many a kind action had Captain Cameron performed in a quiet unobtrusive way which had won for him universal love and esteem, and they were counted fortunate men who served in his company.

A good hour passed before Nell woke, to find herself on the sofa, and wonder where she was in the first few dazed moments on awakening. Soon, however, it all came back to her, and hurriedly she got up from the sofa and went over to the foot of the bed, to return to her watch. "How did I get on to the sofa, nurse ? You couldn't have lifted me."

"No, Miss Cameron ; but your brother's friend, Mr. Ferris, came in, and finding you were dead asleep, he carried you to the sofa, where we thought you would rest more easily, and I'm sure your sleep has done you good. Just see how beautifully my

patient is sleeping ; he is literally drawing in new life with every breath. I really think that seeing you and his mother gave him the turn for the better, for before that he was about as bad as he could be, poor gentleman."

"I don't know what I should have done if he had died, he is such a dear, good brother to me, and every one loves him."

"I can see that, Miss Cameron ; and as for that young Mr. Ferris, he really seems to worship him, and his grief was terrible when he thought the captain was going to die."

"I always knew they were very fond of each other—Damon and Pythias they are called. I had never seen Mr. Ferris until to-day, but I recognized him from the photo which my brother Archie had of him."

"Recognized who, by what photo, eh, Nell ?"

The invalid on waking up had caught the last few words, and was trying to raise himself on his elbow ; the dislocated shoulder, however, soon reminded him that he could not exert himself, and he sank back on the pillows.

"Archie, dear old boy, you have had such a splendid sleep, and it has done you no end of good ; but you must not try to exert yourself in any way, or you will be worse again."

"Upon my word, Nell, I'm surprised to find myself still here ; I quite expected to find myself transported to another sphere, as those spiritualistic fellows term the great Hereafter. The word 'photo' convinced me I was still in the flesh, for I don't suppose photography is practised either 'up along or down along,' as the west country people say."

These words seemed to shock his sister, judging from the serious look on her face, so he hastened to add :

"Don't think me blasphemous, dear ; I didn't mean to speak lightly, and I'll promise not to offend again. But who were you speaking about just now ?"

"I was only telling nurse that I had never met your subaltern before, but I recognized him by having seen his photo ; but you must not talk and tire yourself, dear."

"Where is the mater, Nell ? Isn't she coming to see me ?"

"She is over at the colonel's, resting. We promised to call her as soon as you were awake ; I'll run across now myself and tell her."

Suiting the action to the word, Nell was out of the room and across the square to the colonel's quarters in no time. Mrs.

Cameron, her anxiety over for the present, was found discoursing volubly, as fond mothers are wont to do, to the colonel's wife about her son's many good qualities, and, for a wonder, the picture was not overdrawn, and, more wonderful still, Mrs. Barry was not bored by the recital.

Nellie eventually succeeded in bringing her mother away from her interesting conversation by telling her that the object of her eulogies was wanting to see her. As they were going back together two men watched them from the window of the mess; one of them was young Ferris, and the adjutant, a certain Captain Neill, was the other.

"By Jove! Ferris, what a good-looking girl that sister of Cameron's is. Will they be staying on long, d'you know?"

"I don't know," was the curt rejoinder. Harold Ferris felt annoyed, unreasonably annoyed, to hear her spoken of in the same casual way that ordinary mortals were spoken of; why he should feel so annoyed he did not stop to analyze.

"Because if they stay for any length of time, I shall cultivate the young lady's acquaintance. I wonder if she's fond of driving? If so, she shall drive my tandem as much as ever she likes; 'twill do her good to get away from the sick room sometimes."

"You seem to take it for granted that Miss Cameron is quite ready to be 'cultivated,' as you term it, by you."

"On the contrary, I should say she was decidedly stand off the grass, judging by the way she carries that very pretty head of hers; but that makes the game all the more interesting."

A thrill of gratified vanity, or was it perhaps something deeper, passed through the heart of young Ferris when he considered, that this girl, who was evidently "stand off the grass," to use the slang expression of his companion, had volunteered to speak to him and appeal mutely to him for sympathy in her trouble, without even an introduction.

"I wish you wouldn't speak about Cameron's sister in that very off-hand way; she would not thank you if she knew of it."

"Well, my dear fellow, I am not likely to tell her, so where is the harm? But why this sudden championship of her on your part? Are you also smitten?"

"I wish you would leave her out of the conversation; she is my friend's sister, and I know he would be very angry to think she was discussed in this way."

"Come, I say, you are speaking rather strongly ; the head and front of my offending, after all, is not very great, and only amounts to my having given vent to the admiration which her personal appearance excited. Where is the insult in that ?"

Not having anything to reply to this, young Ferris stalked off, feeling unreasonably annoyed with Captain Neill for expressing his feelings about Nell Cameron in what he chose to consider an off-hand fashion. At the same time he would have been just as put out if Captain Neill had failed to express admiration for his friend's undoubtedly pretty sister ; but what annoyed him more than all was the thought that he, Captain Neill, would have such a pull over himself in the way of providing amusements for Nellie when she was off duty from the sick-room. Why hadn't *he* got a tandem that she could drive, or horses for her to ride ? Never mind, he would work the oracle and get Neill to let him be one of the party, quite regardless of the fact that two is company, three is none.

CHAPTER II.

It was just a fortnight after Mrs. Cameron and Nell had come to Plymouth that speculation was rife concerning the latter. She had several times been seen in Captain Neill's dog-cart with himself, and, sitting behind, Mr. Ferris was invariably to be seen trying to look as if he enjoyed himself ; but every one will agree that the back seat of a dog-cart, when the person you would wish to be next is in front talking to a third person of whom you are jealous, is not the most enviable position.

Some people said they considered Miss Cameron very fast to drive about with two young men in that barefaced manner. This was said chiefly by girls, young or otherwise, who had never been given the opportunity of refusing such an offer. Others, again, commended her for defying conventionality and taking the goods the gods sent in her way.

As a matter of fact she was not at all fast, either in thought or action. The doctor had said she ought to take plenty of air without exertion in the intervals of rest which she took from the sick-room. Hearing of this Captain Neill put his dog-cart at her disposal ; but Mrs. Cameron, not liking the idea of her daughter driving strange horses, good whip though she was, accepted the offer on condition that he, Captain Neill, or Mr. Ferris went with

her to ensure her safety. Consequently Nell accepted the position quite quietly, and if every one seemed to think it all right she would not be the one to raise objections ; it was evidently a case of " *Honi soit qui mal y pense.*"

The tandem is at the door with Captain Neill as Jehu ; Harold Ferris has gone up to Captain Cameron's quarters to call for Nell, who is dressed and waiting for the summons, and in the meantime is having what she calls a lecture from her brother. Very sweet she looks this bright winter morning ; a little soft fur cap surmounts the mobile *riante* face with its frame of red-gold hair. Her perfect figure is set off to advantage by the severity in the lines of her long driving coat. A soft fluffy fur boa gives the finishing touch to a very charming picture. What had Archie Cameron been saying to make his sister look so shy and embarrassed as Harold Ferris came into the room ? Only this : " Now look here, Nell, I won't have you playing fast and loose with Ferris ; he is my friend although he is only my subaltern ; he is too good a fellow altogether to be trifled with, even when my own dear little sister is the one to lead him on. Don't do it, Nell, unless you mean anything by it. I believe you *do* care for him "—noticing the sudden rush of colour to cheek and brow. " Never mind, darling, I'll keep your secret." As he finished these words the object of his remarks came into the room, and needless to say the colour did not vanish quite so quickly from Nell's cheeks. The fact was she was almost angry with her brother for mentioning a subject that she was trying to imagine she had not thought about, and it was galling to her to have this fact brought home to her before she had fully realized it in her own heart. However, at present she has her drive before her ; she will enjoy that and forget that she is falling in love with this handsome and rather impecunious subaltern.

It is a perfect morning for driving, bright, crisp, and exhilarating in the extreme. Plymouth is looking its very best, for the bright sunshine gives the necessary touch of colour to what is otherwise a grey town. The ponies also feel the influence of the sharp invigorating atmosphere, and go down the hill from Main Guard to the Halfpenny Gate with a speed that is simply delicious, as they twist in and out of the traffic and negotiate the corner by Durnford Street so as to just manage to avoid the tram as it whirls round the corner and up the hill.

Nellie has quite recovered herself and is talking to Captain Neill with more than usual vivacity, drawing his attention to people and things as they pass them in their rapid progress. As a rule Captain Neill may be considered a remarkably good whip, quite content when on the box seat to give himself up entirely to the business in hand, namely, the successful handling of his high-spirited ponies. To-day, however, he is driving recklessly and carelessly, and giving far too much attention to his pretty companion, to the detriment of his reputation as a good whip.

Harold Ferris, who is seated behind in his usual solitary position, notices this as their leader has very nearly brought them into collision with the various vehicles that circulate through George Street. Anything like a remonstrance he knows would only call forth a retort to mind his own business or get out if he was nervous. As he is not nervous on his own account, and so not wishing even to appear so, he determines to possess his soul in patience and be ready to rush to the leader's head in any emergency, when—"Hi! you there! look out!" is shouted, apparently close to him; but in a moment horses and dog-cart are hopelessly mixed up with the shaft and wheels of a huge dray. A volley of very unparliamentary language from the driver of the said dray, a good round swear from the tandem driver, and they are all shot out into the road right under the heels of the kicking and terrified ponies. Luckily a passer-by with his wits about him had caught hold of the leader's head and held the terrified animal by his nose and ear, otherwise had he bolted they all three must have been killed.

"Don't cling on to me like this, Miss Cameron; let me free myself. Are you hurt?"

"I am not holding you, I am caught myself. No, I'm not hurt, but I can't move; I am pinned down."

Meanwhile, in less time than it takes to write, Harold Ferris had extricated himself and rushed round to the assistance of the other two.

"Hold on a bit, Neill, don't move, while I free Miss Cameron."

In a few moments he had cut away the reins, which had in some extraordinary way got twisted round Nell's arms and caught behind her back. Once freed from this she was able to get free of the *débris*, and with Harold's assistance to lift herself up, but she had reckoned without her host; her ankle was injured,

and she fell back, or would have done so had not Harold caught her in his arms. The usual crowd had gathered and were offering all sorts of wild suggestions as to what had better be done.

"Better put the young lady in a cab and take her home, I reckon ; she can't walk with a sprained ankle."

This advice was certainly sound, so hailing a passing fly, Harold carried Nell across to it and put her inside. He was shutting the door of the cab and going to give the address, when she stopped him by saying :

"Mr. Ferris, you will come with me ; don't let me go alone ; do come."

A swift flush of pleasure rose to his cheek as he answered :

"To obey your least wish is my greatest pleasure," and suiting the action to the word he took his seat beside her. Meanwhile Captain Neill had emerged from under his dog-cart looking very much battered about and dishevelled. The knowledge that he looked so did not improve his temper, neither did the fact that Miss Cameron had gone off under Harold Ferris's charge tend towards that end.

"Hullo, Neill, come to grief, I see. But what is it ? Can I be of any use ?" The speaker was Surgeon McLean, who had just arrived upon the scene.

"I should think you could see what it is pretty clearly ; the remains of a once dog-cart. But if you want to be of any use go back to barracks and see to Miss Cameron ; she has sprained her ankle. I must stay and see things cleared up a bit."

"Do you mean to say you have let Miss Cameron go back alone ?"

"No, hang it all, man, Ferris went with her."

"Oh ! I see how the land lies," and with this the doctor left Captain Neill to his own meditations and made straight for the barracks.

* * * * *

"Don't think me a brute, but I am almost glad that this accident has happened, as it has given me a chance of looking after you. But that poor little foot—how I wish mine were hurt instead."

"I don't think you a brute at all, and I am very *glad* it all happened."

These last words were spoken very softly.

"Say that again, Nell, my darling. Can I, dare I, ask you? I must tell you I love you; I loved you the first moment I saw your sweet face and heard your voice. I don't know how long ago that was, but time does not count. Nellie, can you love me?"

We know Nellie's secret, and what her answer would be, and so they settled it.

* * * * *

Several of the officers of the —th Highlanders are standing outside the mess of the Raglan Barracks waiting for somebody or something; the pipe-major with the pipers are strutting up and down by the Clock Tower piping away with all their might at the liveliest of Scotch melodies, and to the evident delight of a small group of people who are waiting to see what it is that the "sogers" are waiting for. Suddenly an orderly hurries up to the group outside the mess and informs them that "they are coming." There was no need to tell them, for simultaneously with the pipes piping the "Campbells are Coming," a carriage drawn by a number of picked men from B Company comes under the archway of the Clock Tower, and a hearty cheer goes up from the barrack square, where most of the regiment have turned out to welcome—? Captain and Mrs. Ferris. For this is two years since "they settled it" in the cab, and Harold Ferris, who is now a full blown captain, is bringing home his bride. Very charming Nell looks in her dress of regimental tartan, with the silver piper's buttons, and a neat little sailor hat with the colours of the regiment.

"You must let me welcome you among us, my dear, for your brother's sake as well as your own; you are 'Nell of Ours' now, you know."

So spoke the colonel as he handed Nell out of the carriage.

"Ah, I see you have studied the regulations and donned the regimental tartan."

"Yes, of course, for you see, colonel, I am now *very much* 'attached to the regiment.'"

A Strange Revelation.

By PLEYDELL NORTH,
Author of "M. LE CURÉ," etc.

I AM a professional nurse, holding the position of sister of the Accident Ward in the Metropolitan Hospital. A short time since a man was brought in who had been knocked down and run over by a cart ; a not uncommon occurrence ; but in this instance the interest attaching to the case was greater than usual. The new patient belonged evidently to a superior class of life, and it was said that he had suffered through trying to save a woman.

The woman, who was drunk, escaped unhurt ; and it seemed to us that the life saved must have been of less value than the life sacrificed, for it was known from the first that this man's injuries were fatal. Although apparently exempt from the more common anxieties of life, his face bore evidences of a closer acquaintance with the seamy side than even the majority can claim. Perhaps this, and the whiteness of his hair and beard, made him look older than he really was ; I should have imagined him about sixty-five, but he was powerfully built, and apart from his accident showed few signs of loss of vigour. As a part of my duty, I was present when his wounds were first dressed. He must have suffered terribly, but I never saw such almost super-human endurance. When the torture was over and he opened his eyes they rested upon me. A look of astonished gladness stole into them, and the faintest tinge of colour rose to the white cheeks.

He reminded me at that moment of some one whom I knew to have died more than twenty years before. Afterwards, when I moved about the ward, I often felt that he watched me. He was very feeble from loss of blood, and could speak little. Questions as to his family or friends seemed to annoy him ; when asked if there were any one with whom he wished to communicate, he only mentioned a priest. No inquiries were made as to his fate ; no one came to see him. He lingered three days. I did all I could to make those days peaceful, and I am glad to think

that after the first his sufferings were slight. Indeed, if we had not known the absolute hopelessness of the case, we should have thought him better.

Once I found him writing in pencil in a leathern pocket-book, which had been taken from his coat and placed under his pillow at his request. The priest remained with him the greater part of the last night. Protestant as I am, I was glad, when other more solemn rites were over, to kneel behind the shelter of the screen, which alone separated the bed from the rest of the ward, and join in the prayers for the dying. It seemed a lonely and sorrowful ending; yet it was shorn of the materialism which makes the majority of the death beds we see so painful. If there were no tears of keen personal grief, so also there was no intrusion of personal or worldly anxiety.

I never saw any one apparently so glad to die as John Grey, after he had fulfilled the last duties of his religion. As the end approached, and in the absolute calm that succeeded it, the likeness I have spoken of recurred to me more and more strongly.

The day after the funeral I received a message from the house surgeon asking me to come to his room for a few minutes on a matter of business. I was a little surprised. Such messages were rare. I went down and found he was not alone; the priest whom I had last seen by the bedside of John Grey was with him.

After a few kindly remarks, which made me wonder still more why I had been sent for, Father Lawson said:

"I have a commission to execute, sister; a trust to put into your hands. John Grey begged that this might be given to you the day after he should be buried."

He held out to me the little black pocket-book.

I took it wondering.

"I should advise your examining it in our presence," said the surgeon kindly.

It seemed at first to contain nothing but some pages of writing, then in one of the pockets I discovered two old letters; letters that I knew, though the ink was faded and the paper yellowing fast. I opened them with trembling hands, for I myself had written them—nearly thirty years before, when I was a girl of nineteen, and to be alive seemed a happy thing.

The doctor saw that I was greatly troubled, and kindly interposed to give me the relief of meeting this mystery alone.

"There seems to be nothing here of any consequence," he said cheerfully. "We thought it advisable, in case the book should contain money or papers of value—such things have happened, you know—that you should have witnesses to the manner of your obtaining them ; but I am afraid your legacy is not a substantial one."

I tried to smile and express my astonishment at having been chosen so strangely to receive anything whatever, then thankfully withdrew.

"If the papers throw any light on the dead man's antecedents or family that ought to be acted upon, you will let us know," Mr. R—— added, as he held open the door for me to pass out. The priest said nothing, but I thought he watched me with strangely pitying eyes.

I could not obtain leisure to read the contents of the pocket-book until after the patients were settled for the night, then, in my little room off the ward, I made out the carefully penned lines. The ink was fading, as in my own letters, and the characters were almost as familiar ; but the secret they revealed was more startling than any conjecture that had crossed my brain. To make its connection with myself understood, I must add a few words of a history that, apart from it, is ordinary and commonplace.

I was a girl of eighteen when I first met the two men, Guy Ormsforth and Bryan Galbraith. Both were introduced to me at the same ball. They were cousins, but not troubled with even that family likeness, which is a sort of inconvenient and unsought advertisement. Each possessed a marked individuality and belonged to a distinctive type.

Ormsforth, although slim and slight in figure, was a man of great physical strength. His face was shaven, the features cleanly cut ; his eyes were keen, and ready with swift glances, suggestive both of temper and penetration ; but they also softened quickly into kindness. As I learned to know him afterwards he was sensitive, honest-hearted, nervous and quick-tempered.

Bryan Galbraith, also tall, was stouter in build and undeniably handsome ; one of those men who in society gain a reputation for doing all things well, because they never risk doing anything badly—and who almost invariably succeed in the larger issues

of life—often through a sheer force of animal spirits which refuses to acknowledge defeat. He meant to fascinate me that first night, and unfortunately he succeeded in that.

I have learned to believe the mouth to be a far more reliable index of character than the eyes. The eyes of Bryan Galbraith were laughing, innocent, full of the pleasant truthfulness of a boy. His mouth was hidden by a heavy fair moustache. At eighteen one does not make close studies of character. Bryan Galbraith caught my fancy; his light-heartedness responded to my own youth. It was the more striking because he was then a man of thirty, and experience had also taught him to assume towards women a protecting and deferential manner, which in those days girls found pleasant. On occasions he could be most gravely considerate. I am trying to excuse my own folly. For Ormsforth fell honestly in love with me. I knew it from the first; but he allowed my sway over him to become too absolute, and of course, I preferred Bryan. I believe the desire to outshine Ormsforth made Bryan propose to me; but I did not think so then. Of course also my guardian was annoyed at my choice; he did not share my infatuation, and Ormsforth was wealthy.

More quickly even than usual, six months after my marriage, I began to feel my mistake; for my husband wearied of me. Ormsforth's fidelity had never failed; in my selfishness, when I was infatuated by Galbraith, and still uncertain whether he would ever ask me to be his wife, I had begged the man who loved me, and whose love I had refused, to continue to be my friend. It was a selfish act, thoroughly selfish; at that time his companionship was a relief from my own anxiety; afterwards, when I imagined myself happy, I neglected him, and he accepted my neglect. When I awoke to the truth, he came back; not as a lover: he was more careful of my pride and my honour than in my first desolation I might have been myself but for his caution.

Within the year Bryan left me. He said business called him to Paris, and asked me for a cheque for his expenses, while he allowed me to feel very plainly that he did not want my companionship. For Bryan never had any money. I was what is called an heiress—moderately so—but my guardian had taken care that all I had should remain under my own control—an amount of prudence which at the time had filled me with

indignation. I was too proud to refuse that cheque—the money was the least part of the sacrifice.

He was away more than a year, and after the first month his letters ceased. It was some six weeks later that I heard of the death of Guy Ormsforth. He had started on a walking tour along the northern coast of France before Bryan had spoken of leaving me, and I was daily expecting his return, looking forward to it as the one brightness in my barren life, when the news arrived. The circumstances of his death were exceedingly painful. He had left his hotel to walk to a village about fifteen miles away along the coast. He never returned, and he never reached the village. A fortnight later a body was washed ashore and found lying among the rocks not many miles away. It was past certain recognition, but a silver cigar-case, engraved with the monogram G. O., and which I remembered well, was found in one of the pockets. He was terribly cut and bruised. It was the first time I had felt the near touch of death, and I grieved deeply, knowing how I should miss the fidelity I had been so slow to value. But this natural sorrow was driven from my mind by a blow which in the force of its bitterness made gentler grief seem almost a benediction, and thrust me into a keenness of suffering in which I felt every breath drawn an outrage on the life that I had thought mine.

One morning I was told that a young woman wished to see me who refused her name. I replied that I saw no one under those conditions. I already knew enough of my husband's career to practise caution. Then she asked for a scrap of paper, wrote upon it, "I am Mrs. Bryan Galbraith," inclosed it and sent it up to me. There was no pity in the swift directness of the retort. At once, when I read the words, I felt that they were true, but shrinking dumbly from that inward acknowledgment, I hurried down, telling myself that I only went to seek their refutation.

In my dining-room sat a woman, still young and bearing traces of considerable beauty. She looked refined and of gentle birth. By her side leaned a boy of perhaps five years old. She made a slight movement of surprise when I entered, and did not immediately rise. Her dress was cared for, but very poor—mine had been made in Bond Street. A diamond guard protected my marriage-ring—hers showed plain and unguarded

upon the thin white hand that clasped the child. I stood before her, my shame growing into my heart. After the pause of that first moment she rose to greet me. Her manner was patient and sad, free alike from boldness and confusion.

"I have been told that Mr. Bryan Galbraith lives here," she said in a clear soft voice. "The servant said that Mrs. Galbraith only was at home. I thought perhaps I might see my husband's mother."

For the moment I waived the question of relationship. I saw that she was at any rate unconscious of imposture. She had landed with her child only the day before from New Zealand, and was unhesitatingly ready to give seemingly indisputable proofs of her story. She told me the names of the place and the church where she had been married, and showed me a copy of the certificate. Everything was quite straightforward, and easy to verify or disprove. Apparently, with his usual daring, Bryan Galbraith had only counted on her ignorance of his position, and the length and expense of a journey to England for security. I managed to keep my own secret, at any rate from open avowal, and tried to lead her to infer that Bryan Galbraith was but an occasional visitor in the house, which belonged to me, his brother's widow. I could honestly tell her that I was quite uncertain as to when he would return. She seemed in utter despair when she understood that her quest had failed—that the man she sought was not even in England. She had tracked him so far through one of those acts of carelessness which the cleverest fall into at times. Among some apparently useless bills in an old desk she had found the name and address of his London tailor, which he had failed to destroy; and from this firm she had learned where he was now supposed to be living.

In the prostration that followed her disappointment, I saw that this poor girl was very ill, and my heart melted towards her. Then she told me a little of her story. She had been a governess before she met Galbraith, and in her later destitution the family in which she had lived had advanced the money for her journey to England. She also had had her brief dream of happiness before this man wearied of her as he had wearied of me, but the illusion with her had lasted a little longer. He had left her on the old plea of business in England, urging her failing health as a reason for her not going with him. For a time he had sent

her money; but letters and remittances had both gradually ceased, until she saw only starvation before her, burdened as she was with her child and no longer able to work. I think anxiety for the future of that child had been her chief motive in coming—for herself she would not have cared. Yet God knows, with all her deep sorrow, how I envied her: she was surely an honest woman still.

I could not keep her with me; but I took her to the house of an old servant who had two vacant rooms, and saw that she had all she needed. I let only one person into my confidence—my solicitor, Mr. Lewis. By his advice, a trustworthy person was sent out to New Zealand to make inquiries. The verification of her story, telegraphed home, arrived the day after Mildred Galbraith died. For no care could save her. I suppose hardship had developed a natural tendency to consumption, for she sank into a rapid decline. Almost from the first, the doctor said, she was beyond hope. I promised her the child should be well cared for, and I left him in the charge of the landlady, my late house-keeper, until his father should arrive. Nature would not let me do more—I could not bear him with me.

At the end of the year Bryan came. I had heard nothing to soften my heart towards him. His crime against me was but a type of his life. If he had betrayed the women who trusted him, he had also betrayed his friends. In the silence of his lengthened absence, stories, complaints and accusations crept out, which his presence had subdued. Men proclaimed him a drunkard, a gambler, a trickster—and into the midst of it all he came. I was sitting brooding wearily enough over my wrongs when I heard a man's step upon the stair; and I wondered who it could be that had thus ventured in unannounced. Another moment and Bryan Galbraith stood in the doorway. My anger rose afresh when I saw him. It was nothing less than a cool insult thus to thrust himself upon me, and I rose to meet him, pride mastering even my bitter shame. My first glance told me that he knew he was in my power. He made no attempt to come forward, but stood motionless, apparently afraid to look me in the face.

His silence and quiet gave me time to study him. He was in no way altered, except that he looked as though recovering from recent illness.

"You venture to come here?" I said at last. "By what right do you intrude upon me? I know what I am—what you have made me."

"I have come only for one reason: to ask if any reparation be possible."

I was unprepared for this answer. It was unlike all my previous experience of him.

"The only reparation possible would open before me a worse hell," I said abruptly.

I had in fact been weighing in my mind for weeks past—ever since Mildred's death—the possible tardy regainment of my lost honour against the misery of being legally in the power of this man, and my speech was the outcome of this train of thought.

He showed neither surprise nor annoyance, and his quietude irritated me afresh.

"I suppose you are aware," I went on, "that your wife died a few doors from here in my arms?"

"I know it all. I have seen Lewis; and I repeat I have come to offer you what reparation lies in my power."

When he had said this he came forward into the room, and seating himself in an arm-chair nearly opposite to me, put down his hat and waited again. He had the air of a man whose nature had been forced into quietude by the power of some great shock. I wondered, could it be Mildred's death that had so affected him? I saw that he was in earnest; that an honest name might be mine again if I chose. But the price? I buried my face in my hands. Whichever way I looked, I saw only misery and fresh degradation.

Then he spoke slowly and quite gently. "I know of what you are thinking; I know that my presence must be abhorrent to you. But, believe me, I will never force it upon you. You shall never hear from me nor see me."

A sudden possibility of peace opened before me. I saw the chance of stepping out of a land of loathsome shadows into at least quiescent light.

"You mean this?" I said eagerly.

"Indeed I do; I will draw up any form that may be needful to secure your peace of mind and make my promise legally binding. You can place it in Mr. Lewis's hands. No one else need know."

The eyes which looked into mine were so ineffably sad that I almost pitied him. Whom had this man loved? It is needless to say that I consented. A few days later we were married by special licence at Mr. Lewis's rooms, and the papers ensuring my freedom placed in his hands. I exchanged only the few necessary words with my husband, then we parted. I never saw him again.

He refused to accept any share of the income which was justly his; and the sums which I caused to be paid into his account at the bank remained untouched.

Both he and Ormsforth had been called to the bar. With my husband any profession was always purely nominal, but before long I heard that he was now working unremittingly. He succeeded later to a considerable portion of his cousin's estate, as heir at law; the death being considered proved. It was then reported that he devoted almost his entire income to the clearing of old liabilities, reserving the capital intact for his son. He lavished every care upon the boy, and I began to think that in truth he must have loved Mildred with a passion of which I had not thought him capable. But I was slow to believe in the change. I felt convinced that the old nature would assert itself sooner or later; but I never heard that it did.

He must have had uphill work at first; prejudice was strong against him, and the shackles of old associations with their consequences were hard to shake off. In the midst of his difficulties there were times when I felt that I could have gone to him had he given the slightest sign, but I shrank from making the first move. Afterwards, when he had conquered and grown into fame, it was impossible. Then suddenly, in the midst of success, he accepted an appointment in S. America. He took his son, now a lad of fifteen, with him and I heard no more of either. My life grew monotonous and dreary; even had I been certain of my husband's death I should never have married again.

Soon after his departure for America I entered a hospital as a probationer, and since that time have entirely devoted myself to my profession.

That is all I can tell you on my side; I now copy the words of the diary that you may form your own judgment as to the actual facts.

"July, 184.—Was it justified? Surely, if the removal of

abnormal evil, the extinction of a viciousness that threatens to spread immeasurable ruin, can be reckoned a righteous act. And yet, the awful void left by a life that has lived and lives no more is before me, and out of that void I see ever the eyes that pleaded for redemption.

"They are my condemnation, and force from me the prayer of my agony. 'Would to God—the God whom I have denied—in whose place I have substituted irresponsible force—that mine had been the life laid down.'

"We were walking on the shore when he opened before me the full sink of his iniquity. He talked lightly, flinging the story on the soft summer wind, that surely sighed beneath the burden of his words, sullyng the fair sunshine, casting a mist of darkness over the shining sea. I walked further apart from him, and he shouted the words louder—there was none but I to hear—laughing a little in the pauses of his talk. I knew that he had been drinking heavily, otherwise he would have been more cautious and less truthful.

"I felt that I hated him, loathed him with a deadly loathing. We had been at school together and I had found it out in part: the cunning, the mean cheater, the cowardice; but his handsome face and frank ways had carried him safely through, shielding him with the majority, even from suspicion.

"Later on they had won *her*. They had enabled him to keep his viciousness a hidden tale until now—in very wanton indifference laughing at the secret of my fancied powerlessness—he flung it forth, finding a keenness of delight in torturing me.

"For he knew that I loved her; that so long as his exposure meant her dishonour, he was safe.

"I walked on rapidly, keeping silence. Presently we reached a rough pathway, worn up the almost perpendicular cliff. It was formed by a series of ledges of rock, the intermediate spaces covered with crumbling soil, where some grasses had sprung and a few bushes taken root.

"'The tide is coming in,' he said. 'We had better get up the cliff here.'

"It was nothing of a climb, but we were obliged to go in single file. He was in front of me. He turned round from time to time as he pointed out the successfulness of his villany, the helplessness of his dupes. We were half way up the cliff when I

saw ahead of us a ledge of rock larger than the rest, a flat ledge upon which perhaps two men might stand. As we neared it I suddenly swung myself in front of him, holding by the bushes. I gained the flat stone just as he was about to place his foot upon it, and seized him round the body. The movement was swift and took him utterly by surprise. It was alike impossible to advance or retreat; to struggle there meant certain death for one or both. His eyes looked into mine, and I saw a sudden ghastly terror chase away the sparkle of their devilry.

"Ormsforth, are you mad?' he panted.

"Yes, I was mad. I thought of *her*, the sweet face lined with tears, the fair head dishonoured, the gentle heart broken, as ere long it must be if I let him live.

"Mad or sane, you shall answer to me here for your villainy.'

"Then we closed in the struggle that must be mortal. He could not escape. I was the stronger man of the two; my rage made me fearless. It mattered nothing to me that he might drag me with him to certain death. It would have been better so. But he was afraid throughout—terribly afraid. In the struggle we swung round, and he was on the outside. Before long I felt his grip relax; he was falling—falling backwards. I had the impulse then to drag him back, but the impetus given by that swing was too strong.

"Was it self-preservation? Was it justice? Was it—murder? I loosed my hold. Once more his eyes looked into mine, wide open with growing horror, and pleading for salvation.

"I know that he was killed. I know that he was carried out to sea by the tide. I know this, for I waited and watched until another day dawned, not caring whether I were discovered or not.

"Now almost a year has passed, and I have received no tidings from the outer world; but if I hoped that in coming here I should gain solitude my hopes have failed.

"The link that in life seemed to connect my fate with that of Galbraith is unbroken by death, and its results are the same.

"We fought for the same prizes at school, and he invariably won; we loved the same woman, and he won again; then the last struggle, and I—did I win that time?

"I gave him a new birth—a birth into the illimitable. I shook him into a sudden awakening, a consciousness of his own vileness, in that last hour of mortal peril, into the fear and loathing of it. I

did this ; I see it in his eyes. I say I see it, for now I come to the heart of my bitterness. Through all these months, this man, dead to the world, has lived to me. I feel his power ; he is stronger than I, stronger in the spirit than he was in the body. He is drawing my very soul into his ; I feel the depth of his remorse ; I hear his wild regrets for the evil he left unatoned. And the closeness of this communion has wrought a transformation even more terrible.

"I knew it finally to-day. I looked into the mirror for the last time hoping that the horror which had been unfolding itself during the past months would prove a madness or a dream, and in the broad daylight, and in, I firmly believe, the full possession of my senses I saw that it was true.

"The reflected image that looked back at me was the image of Bryan Galbraith. The eyes were the eyes that had flashed into mine that sunny day upon the cliff as he fell backward from my grasp into death.

"I have read of a likeness growing between those who live in constant companionship and close communion in the natural order. What mortal companionship or communion can equal in closeness the intimacy that has been forced upon me by the man I strove to thrust from the earth for ever? What does it mean? What will be the end? Must I lead a dual life, bearing his burden as well as my own? Is the life I thought I had destroyed and dismissed into nothingness, inextricably united to mine, until death summon me to stand alone—surely alone, then, at the last—before the Judge in whom I can no longer disbelieve?

"There is one chance for me. The change which is so apparent to me may be hidden from the eyes of other men. Yet I see the fishermen on the beach look at me strangely; their wives whisper together as I pass, and the children crowd together or run away and hide. The change has come gradually, starting no one in the process, as the change from youth to age.

"It is a punishment so appalling, stretching into the most minute details of life, allowing never a moment of respite or intermission. How can I bear it and live? Am I mad already? Is the whole some fiendish imagination?

"I will put it to the test. I will go back to the world that has known *me* and known *him*, and abide the verdict.

"The Regent, July 20th.—A week has passed since I made my last entry and started on my homeward journey. Already any doubt I may have had is settled beyond question. I came straight to this place, where I knew I should meet men who would recognize me in one character or the other. On my way to the coffee-room I entered a long corridor, when suddenly, in the light of the flaring gas, I saw coming towards me Bryan Galbraith. Face, gait, figure, all were his. There was no doubt. One moment of wild hope—then I knew that the end of that corridor was a sheet of glass. I could have yelled aloud in my helpless anguish. I had not been half an hour in the coffee-room when a man whom Galbraith had known intimately entered. I saw that he gave a start of recognition, but I kept the evening paper before me and waited. He came across the room, and I waited still, for the assurance either that I was a hopeless maniac or the victim of a worse doom.

"'Why, Galbraith—surely it is Galbraith—where on earth, old fellow, have you been hiding?'

"I was obliged to answer him. I wondered grimly what my voice was like in his ears. He did not seem to notice anything remarkable. I replied to his eager questioning in as few words as I could; then made the excuse of an appointment. As I rose to leave him he laughed.

"'I at least never believed you dead, my dear fellow; but it was a good move. That affair in Paris might have been awkward, by all accounts.'

"He sauntered away, and I gained my own rooms.

"July 21st.—The struggle is over, and I have attained a certain calm. Have I succumbed or conquered? In the extinction of the life of Guy Ormsforth, in the outward re-creation of the man he killed, lies my atonement. I watched through the pitiless hours of the night by the closing of my own grave, reviewing the life of the man I had known—in manhood, childhood and youth—until it culminated in that last fatal act.

"It was not a life to lead naturally to such an ending; but neither was it a life to offer any preservative against it. But good or bad it will be known no more. There were old associations connected with it that were pleasant and very dear; but these I had already cut asunder with my own hand. In one way, my punishment is a boon. It is all my own; it will carry with it no

reflection of shame or suffering upon others, as would the knowledge of the truth. It remains only for me to make such atonement as lies in my power; to redeem the past of Bryan Galbraith in his person, that such honour as may still be attainable may be accredited to him. There lies before me one all-important work: I must ascertain whether the New Zealand story is absolutely true; and whether the poor girl left there is living. Also, he spoke of a child. It is possible that malice may have prompted him to make the worst of the position; that Patricia may not prove to be, of the two women, the one most grossly deceived. There are, therefore, two chances—one for the preservation, the other for the restoration of her honour. In either case, she who has been my friend, the deep passionate adoration of my life, must be a stranger, bearing the title of my wife. That other alternative, the alternative that she may one day learn her dishonour, without power of reparation, and regard me as its author, I hardly dare to face. The person most likely to be able to give me full particulars of her present position, and her feeling towards Bryan Galbraith, is Mr. Lewis, her solicitor; also I shall be able to gather from him whether any suspicion as to the legality of her marriage has arisen during this year of silence; and the general opinion as to the disappearance of Ormsforth.

"23rd.—I have seen Lewis, and I have seen *her*. The news which Lewis had for me made my way clear. Mildred Galbraith has died in England under Patricia's care; and Lewis alone knows the secret. What he thought of my share in it—the share for which I am answerable—he let me know with unmitigated plainness. Only the plan which I had already proposed to myself, and the desire to save her, made him consent to anything short of public exposure. I also learned from him that Ormsforth is supposed to have been drowned. The sea gave up its dead too late for the revelation of the secret. It was natural to suppose that the silent witness was mine. I had been seen to take the path to the shore. Bryan was believed to be in Paris—which he had, in fact, left the previous day. The clearest testimony was borne by the cigar-case—mine—I remember passing it to him when he first joined me. He never returned it. It was not likely I should remember to ask for it in what followed—the very fact had escaped my memory.

"In due time I inherit my own property—the greater part of it

—in the person of Bryan Galbraith, heir-at-law to his cousin, Ormsforth, in default of a nearer relation. I had made no will. This will be a material aid in the life before me. Bryan's son is in England, under the care of Patricia.

"After I left Lewis, I went straight to her. I went up unannounced. The servants were the same; they knew me for their master, and were too well trained even to show surprise at my return. She was sitting alone and idle in the small drawing-room. Oh! pitiful wreck of hopeless grief—life for life—soul for soul. I felt that I could bear the weight of my crime, of its expiation, if through it I might bring you some consolation. Her hands lay listless on her black gown; her cheeks were pallid and sunken with weeping; her eyes looked at me almost without surprise. They seemed dull and hard. And this wrecked life at twenty-one—was the doom of Bryan Galbraith too bitter? If only his blood were not on *my* hands. What it cost me to stand there and face her scorn! Darling, I never loved you as I love you to-day. You are more beautiful to me in the stricken abasement of your womanhood than in the brightness and freshness of the early days. I longed, sweetheart, to lay my head at your feet and tell you all the truth—all I had sinned and done for your sake—but the iron bar of separation, deathly in silence and helplessness, is between us; and yet you will call yourself my wife. I said nothing of all this. I stood like a hound before her, and offered her my terms, and she accepted them. I am to give her the legal right to bear the name that has become mine, and after that never to see her or hear her voice again.

"30th.—The thing that I, Ormsforth, prayed for so madly in the old days has been granted me. Patricia Langton has stood by my side and touched my hand with hers, and of her own free will has made herself my wife. She looked calm, almost radiantly peaceful, as though thanking God for this great mercy shown her after such grief. She had gained something that was more than her old beauty. But she showed no signs of softening towards me. Since I dared not have accepted it, I thank God for that also. It is safer that she should believe that such love as Bryan Galbraith had to give is buried with his first wife. I saw her to her carriage; when she turned her head I kissed the grey homespun gown she had chosen for her second wedding dress. Good-bye, my darling; good-bye.

"Every day shows fresh difficulties and fresh dangers to be met—debts of honour and dishonour—claims and reproaches—entanglements where ignorance of the past makes action doubly perplexing, even with the aid of Galbraith's papers. But all pain all threatened exposure, seems slight after the dishonour I have borne before my wife. I have one consolation, a strange one: the child that calls me father, the son of the dead woman whom I never saw. From what I can gather, he must be like her; I trust he inherits her nature. I will write in this no more until the end is near. To keep a daily record of the struggles before me would be futile and against my purpose, which has been simply to leave a written statement of the truth."

Here followed a blank page, then a short entry in pencil, which must have been that I saw him write.

"The end has come. For twenty years I have carried with me this record and the two letters—the only letters I ever had from her, my wife—written when she was a girl and Guy Ormsforth her lover. When my work in England was done, I went abroad, thinking it would be easier to live where I should never hear her name. Now, believing the end to be near, I have come home, longing for tidings of her; hoping, perhaps, to catch a glimpse of her face before I die. My desire has been more than answered. I have been brought to die *here*; and the first person upon whom my eyes rested, in the dress of a hospital nurse, was my wife. She did not know me—how should she?—although her eyes looked into mine, filled with pity for the lonely man dying in her care. I gave the name of John Grey as the first that occurred to me. What does it matter? While I live she must never know the truth. I have no worldly cares upon my mind. I have settled all that; everything that was mine belongs to Bryan's son. She has promised to remain with me to the end—only a few hours—and to bring me the consolation of the religion to which in my extremity I have turned for strength.

"I believe I have redeemed my pledge. An infinite peace is taking possession of me, although it is Guy Ormsforth, the criminal, who is dying. The curse of my crime is leaving me, and I go alone and, I trust, forgiven.

"Farewell, sweet wife. Will the long, patient love of my life make you also forgive?"

* * * * *

The tears which I believed years of isolation and sorrow to have dried for ever rose with the tumultuous aching sobs of later age as I read these last words. I wept afresh over the grave of him whom I had mourned and missed for twenty years, and whom I had not known. The likeness that haunted me in the face of John Grey was the likeness of Guy Ormsforth. With the memory of that face, from which life failed, before me, I know what I believe ; but to the world I leave the identity of this man an open question. I suppose the only opinion tenable by reason or science would be that he was Bryan Galbraith, murderer and madman ; that the desire of Guy Ormsforth's wealth had impelled him to his worst crime, when he was already half-frenzied with drink ; and that the record of the diary was the record of the wild impressions of a diseased and tortured brain.

Have the deductions of reason and science ever been defied by inexplicable fact ?

My Friend the Major.

By MARY HAMPDEN.

MY friend the major was evidently out of spirits. I did my best to please him; I tried conversation, but he replied in monosyllables, and then I relapsed into sympathetic silence.

"By Jove! Mildmay," he exclaimed, "you might do or say something to enliven the way a little."

"My dear fellow, I thought you preferred your own thoughts."

"Pshaw! my thoughts are not enviable."

My friend the major certainly was out of his usual spirits. We had been travelling together the greater part of the day, and I had observed that a strange depression was gradually assuming command over his temper.

He was leaning back in the corner of a ramshackle fly that was conveying us from the station to his place in Hertfordshire, his lips smiling superciliously at the improvements time had effected in the county, his eyes gazing sadly at the wintry landscape. He had not volunteered a remark all the way down from town, and yet he had the effrontery to blame me for the silence.

We had been brother officers; had been, I say, for we had both attained to retiring age; that very day we had taken leave of old comrades and were preparing to enter the noble corps of country gentlemen. Major John Cliffe! Poor old fellow, he never would have been a major if a sweet-faced, false-hearted little country girl had not jilted him years ago in the very county we were traversing. I had heard the tale, and could guess the old associations which were crowding and pushing for notice in my friend's memory. Many a day we had stood shoulder to shoulder amid the darkest scenes, and I was not likely to desert him because of a harsh word or a peevish lecture.

"Ah!" I said to myself, "what a rascal Cupid is! That must be the very stile where they met in the days of his boyish wooing; his hands clench the evening 'special' till the paper rustles and quivers in his grasp. Stay—he is leaning forward to gain a better view of the church. Is he thinking of a wedding that might have been? Can he picture the scene, the huzzaing

tenantry, the flowers and feathers, the blushing bride? No, I was wrong after all; he was gazing at the grave-yard, not at the church, at the marble cross which marks the resting-place of his many ancestors. Does he wish himself among them?"

As we passed the low wall which skirted the cemetery, Jack turned to me with a smile, the fit of ill-temper gone.

"Mildmay, old fellow, you won't thank me for bringing you to this out-of-the-way place. The house is dilapidated, I hear; the old servants must be deaf and stupid; my friends are dead or absent. You will wish yourself back at barracks before you've been half a week at Cliffe."

"Nonsense," I returned briskly; "I came for your society, not for your friends; to help you reform dilapidation, not to cavil at it. Country life may prove rather trying at first, but cheer up, old boy; it's a long lane that has no turning."

My commonplace remark was apparently prophetic; the road took a sudden turn to the left, and in less than a minute we were entering the gateway leading to as charming a country-box as it was ever my lot to see. The scene, fortunately, can be described in a few words. I agreed to write my friend's history, but did not bargain for incidental descriptions of rural surroundings.

A carriage-drive rounding a clump of laurel led to a low flight of steps, which, in their turn, gave entrance to a verandah, the very place for a bachelor smoke; the verandah was divided by a door which opened into a wide hall; the hall gave access to innumerable rooms all furnished with wise taste. No little side-tables standing at inconvenient angles for the purpose of displaying bewildering nick-nacks, no row of stiff-backed chairs ranged round the walls, suggesting a prayer meeting or a funeral; no vases on the floor, or milking-stools or other inappropriate objects; the place was evidently meant for life, for comfortable life. The servants *were* old and deaf, but my friend was hardly prepared for the respectful warmth of their reception; in their eyes he was still "Mr. Jack," not a stern bronzed man. Our dinner that night was badly cooked, and luke-warm when served, but (so much for sentiment!) we couldn't find it in our hearts to scold the aged retainers who lingered about the rooms and halted at the doorways to catch a glimpse of the "young master."

"Aye, it does one's 'eart good to look at 'im," murmured the old butler; "a finer man nor 'is father, tho' 'e in 'is time was reckoned the 'andsomest man in the county!"

"Jest to see 'im sittin' there, like the past days come back," echoed the white-haired housekeeper; "an' I as nursed 'im on my knee when 'is poor mother was that ill she couldn't take 'im; to think 'e'd 'ave growed to be such an 'onour to 'is country."

Jack rose and went to the door, shaking hands right and left, with a flush of pride on his brow and a glimmer of something else in his eyes. Well, we men don't care to own to sentiment, so I will say no more about our first evening at Cliffe.

Next morning we transacted business, examined leases and accounts, interviewed gardeners, coachman, &c., and paid a visit to the stables, where the major's gallant grey was shrilly neighing his contempt for his new surroundings. A few feeble old carriage horses were raising their downcast heads in wonder; not an animal there (with the exception of the grey) that I would have valued at more than ten good sovereigns. My friend sighed heavily, and we passed on to the farm buildings, fruit gardens, vineries, finding all alike dejected in appearance. We did not have a cheerful morning, and I was glad when the time came for walking back to lunch.

We sat talking and smoking late into the winter afternoon, and I was preparing my mind for a cosy evening, when Jack, rising and laying a hand on my shoulder, surprised me by saying:

"Mildmay, my dear fellow, I hope you won't be very much bored if I leave you alone? I'm going for a ride round the country, but I shall not be long; perhaps you have some letters to write?"

Going out riding in the cold dusk! Relinquishing light, wine, warmth, cigars, and the society of a man who was devoted to him! My friend the major was out of spirits again. Poor old man! He came home some hours later, wet through with the mist, and cold at heart, I knew. Cupid again. How much a false frivolous girl may have to answer for. I myself could fairly say that I feared neither foe nor danger, but I did fear love. "If a man once falls a prey to the tender passion," I said to myself, "there is no knowing what may become of him."

Jack was talkative after dinner.

"Mildmay, do you know any of the people round about?"

"Well, there are the Leeson—I met Fred Leeson last year in India ; I could renew his acquaintance if I wished—and the Phipperings, the widow lady with the two pretty daughters who came to Aldershot once."

"I think I remember something about Miss Leeson. Wasn't she engaged to a man who broke his neck at York steeplechase?"

"Yes, a very fair girl with a neat little fortune."

The major smoked in silence for some few minutes, then, slowly removing his cigar, he crossed the room to the fire, and turning, faced my arm-chair. His expression was grave ; I had known him too many years not to be aware that he had arrived at some important decision, and I had not long to wait before he announced it.

"I told you I had a selfish motive in persuading you to come down to this dilapidated hole ; the place would be bad enough in May, but in October it is simply unbearable. You have given me your advice about the estate ; now I want you to find me a wife, Mildmay. I cannot pass Christmas here haunted by old memories ; the loneliness unnerves me . . . You are the best friend a man could have, but you've never been jilted, so you don't understand—if I am not married before the festive season I shall go abroad for ever."

I was utterly surprised.

"But, my dear fellow, you might spend Christmas in town, and then come back again."

"If I once leave Cliffe, I leave it for ever. You have never failed me yet ; you will not desert me now?"

"No, I couldn't, Jack, dear boy. I don't feel altogether satisfied, but I'll do my best. We will commence the wife-hunt to-morrow."

"You won't find me difficult to please, Mildmay. All girls are the same to me now ; only keep me from being deceived again."

"We had better begin by calling upon the Leesons. Margaret is supposed to be very charming—you might like to console her—twenty-nine, tall, good-looking."

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Come to bed, Charlie, and we will finish our talk and reckon up individual charms by the cool light of morning."

Jack Cliffe laughed sarcastically. "A very quiet, gentle girl will suit him best," I said to myself ; "he will fall gradually in love with her, will tell her his troubles, and discover that she alone

can comfort him. How fortunate that I should have thought of Margaret Leeson."

The morning found my friend's determination unchanged. He did not speak again upon the subject, but I heard him order the horses to be ready at eleven, a groom to follow. We discussed the weather, the daily papers, the shooting, carefully avoiding the least reference to Christmas, and at the time appointed we rode off, the major talkative, I feeling a terrible weight of responsibility. What if some confiding English girl should be persuaded into a loveless match? Would it comfort Jack, or would it lead to greater misery for them both? In any case had I the slightest right to try to bring about such a marriage? I was still undecided about the point when we entered the gates of Vale Lodge.

Fred Leeson—a bright young man, whom I rather liked—received us with enthusiasm. We were introduced to Margaret, and found her a reserved, languid girl, too much absorbed in the intricacies of worsted-work to pay more than the slightest attention to the conversation. Fred proposed a visit to the paddock.

"Hullo, Madge, you'd better come too."

She assented wearily; accepting the major's polite attentions with an indifferent bow and a shadowy smile; the cool crisp air failed to bring the least colour to her pallid cheek, and she held up an umbrella to shade her eyes from the wintry sun. As I watched her tall, slim figure passing along the garden path beside my friend, I felt very sorry for the shock and the trouble from which the poor girl was suffering, but was conscious of the fact that our first visit had proved a failure.

We were traversing one of those winding paths, assiduously cultivated, branches meeting overhead, grass beneath the feet, which in country estates are invariably designated "woodland walks." Shrubs tortured by the pruning-knife bordered the turf, and at every turn a seat was stationed by a tree.

On one of these seats sat a widow-lady, without exception the prettiest little woman I have ever seen, whose sombre dress suited her to perfection. I recognized her in a moment. Old Time during twenty years had stolen a few of her beauties, only to replace them by others; the fair hair had not lost its golden light; the eyes, though worn, had gained in expression; the sensitive mouth, which had smiled too often and too much, had become

pathetic ; the dark lashes rested upon cheeks as perfect in contour though less rounded. Notwithstanding the difference between girl and woman, it was not difficult to recognize in Lady Mary Marleigh the Mary Lumley whose broken vow had driven the major far from Cliffe.

The hand which should have worn his wedding-ring lay upon her knee ; she was gazing at the golden circlet which had pledged her faith to another, and I saw she had been crying. That is the way of the world. We human beings make our own misfortunes and then lament them.

I had barely time to remember the awkwardness of the situation before Jack saw her. She sprang to her feet with a low cry ; in another instant he was clasping both her little hands in welcome.

Jilted ! Forsaken ! His hopes ruined—his ambition killed by her infidelity, and the man was gazing at her face, and murmuring so low that I could scarcely hear the words.

"Mary ! have courage. I fear I startled you !"

"Startled me ? Oh, Jack, I was thinking of you. Have you ever forgiven me ?"

"Years ago, love—years ago."

Luckily Fred and Margaret were out of sight ; I stole away through the bushes, it was not a scene for a third person. My friend had told me the truth, he had not proved hard to please. I recalled his weary tone—"All girls are alike to me now." Yes, with him to have loved once was to have loved always.

I strolled back across the fields through the winter sunshine, wondering long at my own blind folly. To think that all the years I had known Jack Cliffe I had so mistaken his character. I had thought him unforgiving and cynical ! Yet, proud as I knew him to be, could he bear to listen to affectionate words from her whose falsehood had wrecked his life ? Could he help scorning her in his heart ?

Oh, that long, dreary day ! may it never be my fate to spend such another. The hours followed each other with laggard steps—four o'clock to five—five to six—and from six on till nine. Old John came in to know whether I would wait dinner for master. I answered yes, and throwing great lumps of coal upon the fire resigned myself to my fate.

Jack came at last, so softly that I did not hear him ; perhaps I had been dozing over my own reflections.

"Well, Cliffe," I exclaimed, "I thought you were never coming."

"I am sorry you waited for me—it was selfish to forget all about you, but I've been lost to every thought but one this evening. I know you'll wish me joy, Mildmay."

"So you are really engaged again to the girl who forsook you?"

Jack smiled as he answered me :

"I don't think I ever left off being engaged to her ; and as she is no longer a girl, but a woman who has known trouble, I must try and add comfort to love . . . I never could have forgotten her, so all your trouble would have been in vain, Charlie, and December would have seen an unhappy bachelor flying from his home. You will help me make Cliffe gay for Christmas, won't you ? My wife must have everything bright about her."

But I persisted, roused into expressing my feeling somewhat bluntly :

"Do you mean to say you've forgiven her for jilting you?"

Jack looked gravely at the fire and pondered deeply. I had expected to anger him, but he was evidently not displeased, only thoughtful. He sat silent so long that I thought he had forgotten my question, when he suddenly looked me full in the face and said :

"If she needs forgiveness, I can leave that to Heaven. She is in want of happiness, and I mean to give it her."

And this was the way my friend the major found a wife. I never knew him to be a very religious man, he wasn't in the habit of speaking about Heaven, but when he did he usually settled a point with it.

So the autumn passed away, and I never knew a man so changed—jovial, light-hearted, and at peace—his nature seemed to be freed from the coils of the demon sorrow. I never heard him make a cynical speech, or give one sneer at the world's expense. I believe there are some hearts for whom love alone is too dependent a passion, who need to feel it hallowed by a touch of pity. I believe that Jack's face when he brought his wife home to Cliffe was radiant with a happiness which could never have been as earnest in the days of his boyish romance.

My dear old friend ! his years of sorrow had passed into a life

of fireside joy, which no doubt could now assail, which no lover's tiff could mar.

The old deaf servants clustered in the hall to welcome their "young master's" bride. She took my hand and smiled at me through her tears.

"Major Mildmay, I hope you will give me a welcome too? I will try all my life to make up to Jack for—for——"

And then the sweet voice faltered, and she turned away to dry her eyes that he might not see her crying.

What a gay Christmas that was at Cliffe! My pen is quite unequal to the task of describing it—good old British cheer, home love, and universal good-will. I took my leave on New Year's day, and my friend the major said, with a great hand-shake:

"God bless you, Mildmay! You've helped to make me the happiest man in England."

I was certain it was no doing of mine, but I liked to be thanked for it, and by the next Christmas he possessed another cause for happiness—the deaf old servants clustered in admiration around a little "Master Jack."

Not much of a tale, is it? Only a life's love, cherished through sorrow, blossoming at last into the fairest of household flowers. May Heaven grant many a man a still more uneventful history—without the years of waiting, without the broken vows. Few would grumble at the absence of thrilling incident, I fancy.

Somehow Jack's wedding made me think seriously; he found such comfort himself in helping his wife to forget her former unhappy life that I envied him the power of consolation, and wished myself to guard some tender creature from sad memories of the dead past, and brighten her living future. I married soon, and settled down near the Cliffes. My wife talks very prettily, and is not always absorbed in worsted work—she does not spare her smiles either, and has learned to like the sunshine. Poor dear Margaret! how I misjudged her that day, and how often she thanks me for having delivered her from her "wicked, sulky misery," as she calls it. Bless the dear girl! for how much have I to thank her! Home sympathy, fireside comfort, and last, but not least, a baby girl. We have decided that when the child grows up she is to marry Jack's son.

From our windows I can see across the fields—the summer

shadows are lengthening on the turf—the sun is gliding slowly down the west, reluctant to leave old England—and on a distant lawn before a gabled house, I recognize the Clifles, taking an evening stroll, arm in arm, he bending his tall figure as he gazes in her face.

He looks across the fields and waves his hat to me—I return our usual greeting—it is our “good-morning” and “good-night”—it means much which two men of the world do not care to speak to each other: it signifies a life-long friendship; it embodies the simple prayer, “God bless my friend the major!”

Some Ways of the World: Bygone and Present.

No. II.

By W. W. FENN.

THE Old Dover Road, or, as at its start from town it is called, the Old Kent Road, is another highway of the world familiar to me in youth. Most of the spots immortalized by Dickens on this, his favourite route, were well known to me, and it is always with no little interest that I come upon such passages in his works as touch on or describe them: Shooter's Hill, Dartford, Gravesend, past Gad's Hill, through Strood, Rochester and Chatham, and so on away by Sittingbourne, Faversham and Canterbury, etc. Especially did I, and do I still, follow David Copperfield in his escape from the degrading life he was made to pass in pasting labels on blacking bottles, etc., at Murdstone and Grimby's, to the home of his aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood, at Dover, and where he arrived ragged and starved! I knew most of the places on the road where his various adventures befel, particularly those in connection with the old Jew to whom he sold his waistcoat for fourpence at Chatham. Nor, I take it, am I singular in my sympathy with the hero's association with the well-known highway. He traversed it somewhat before my time, but the local colour had undergone little change when I, too, first tramped along it and reaped an experience of the long stage waggon on part of the route.

My father was a native of Faversham, so that I was led thither on many early occasions, and having exploring propensities used to ramble far afield. Once I walked away to, and far beyond, Sittingbourne, late on a summer's afternoon, and not until night began to fall was I reminded of the distance from home. I was very tired, and gladly availed myself of a wagoner's offer to give me a lift back in his vehicle, which I met on its way down to Dover. Thus I realized the truth of that well-known description of a night journey in a long stage waggon: "What a soothing way of travelling to lie inside that slowly moving mountain, listening to the tinkling of the horses' bells, the occasional smacking of the carter's whip, the smooth rolling of the great broad wheels, the rattle of the harness, the cheery

good-nights of passing travellers, jogging past on little short-stepped horses, all made pleasantly indistinct by the thick awning, which seemed made for lazy listening under, till one fell asleep. The very going to sleep, still with an indistinct idea, as the head jogged to and fro upon the pillow, of moving onward, with no trouble or fatigue, and hearing all these sounds like dreamy music, lulling to the senses, and the slow waking up, and finding one's self staring out through the breezy curtain, half opened in the front, far up into the cold bright sky with its countless stars, and downward at the driver's lantern dancing on like its namesake, Jack of the swamps and marshes, and sideways at the dark grim trees, and forward at the long bare road rising up, up, up, until it stopped abruptly at a sharp, high ridge as if there were no more road and all beyond was sky, and the stopping at the inn to bait, and being helped out, and going into a room with fire and candles, and winking very much, and being agreeably reminded that the night was cold, and anxious for very comfort's sake to think it colder than it was. What a delicious journey was that journey in the waggon.

"Then the going on again—so fresh at first, but shortly afterwards so sleepy. The waking from a sound nap as the mail came dashing past like a highway comet, with gleaming lamps and rattling hoofs, and vision of a guard behind standing up to keep his feet warm, and of a gentleman in a fur cap opening his eyes and looking wild and stupefied—the stopping at the turnpike, where the man was gone to bed, and knocking at the door until he answered with a smothered shout from under the bed-clothes in the little room above, and presently came down, night-capped and shivering, to throw the gate wide open and wish all waggons off the road except by day. The cold sharp interval between night and morning—the distant streak of light widening and spreading, and turning from grey to white, and from white to yellow, and from yellow to burning red—the presence of day, with all its cheerfulness and life—men and horses at the plough, birds in the trees and hedges, and boys in solitary fields frightening them away with rattles. The coming to a town—people busy in the markets; light carts and chaises round the tavern yard; tradesmen standing at their doors; men running horses up and down the street for sale; pigs plunging and grunting in the dirty distance, getting off with long strings at their legs,

running into clean chemists' shops and being dislodged with brooms by 'prentices; the night coach changing horses, the passengers, cheerless, cold, ugly and discontented, with three months' growth of hair in one night—the coachman fresh as from a band-box, and exquisitely beautiful by contrast; so much bustle, so many things in motion, such a variety of incidents—when was there a journey with so many delights as that journey in the waggon?" Delights, alas! to be succeeded by a painful discovery: I so enjoyed the journey between sleeping and waking throughout the night, that when at last I did awake for good—or bad, as it turned out—I found we had gone beyond Canterbury, and that consequently I was now even farther to the south of Faversham than at the start I had been at the north of it. Yes, I had overshot by many miles the corner at the head of the Faversham Mall where I ought to have got out.

However, it was now a lovely summer's morning, and except for the long walk, the scare I had given them at home by staying out all night, and the consequent wiggling from the governor, no great harm was done, and as I look back I hug with satisfaction the thought that I have had my experience of such a rumbling ramble—an experience not easily obtained since the London, Chatham and Dover line has swept from off the road the long stage waggon, the mail coaches, and the rest of such characteristics of those bygone ways of the world.

Nevertheless sufficient remains, albeit mingled with those of this present year of grace, to make the old high roads well worthy of our ramblings, especially if, as in my case, the traveller has developed in later life a strong love for the beautiful in nature and antiquity. Very honestly, therefore, do I sympathize with a certain able writer on these matters when he says: "The railway is very far from being, in the main, so great an enemy to rural beauty and retirement as we are most of us disposed to consider it. It has destroyed, indeed, the grace and tranquillity of many an old town and village. Many an ancient 'High Street,' whose red tiled roofs, half-timbered walls and brick pavements used not long ago to slumber in the hot noon, with scarcely a sign of an inhabitant, has become the busy and incongruous main thoroughfare of an otherwise brand new town, of which the 'inns' are 'hotels,' the rows of new six or eight roomed edifices, 'Inkerman,' 'Alma,' 'Gladstone,' or 'Harting-

ton' Houses, and the labourers' cottages 'villas,' the sordid material of which is hidden and rendered impervious to rain by stucco facings, after Palladio or Brunelleschi. Nearly all the pleasant old towns and villages which lie within twenty-five miles of London, and which have been accommodated with railway stations, have undergone this change, as also are many of those which are at a much greater distance from the capital, and which first acquired the distinction of being stopped at by the trains of the great original lines. But as railway stations have become multiplied all over the country, they have proportionately ceased to become centres of attraction, there being only a certain amount of population to attract; and a new station now has little influence upon its neighbourhood, particularly when, as is commonly the case, the towns or villages and the stations are a mile or so apart.

"The lovers of country solitude and peace are well compensated for the damage which so many sequestered spots have suffered from railways, by the extra solitude and peace which many more have gained by the drainage of population to the railway towns; and although the near passage of a line of railway carriages is a horror to the eye, the distant view of a train, winding, like a many-jointed worm, through the valleys and across the plains, and setting its long track of white breath against the green woods and pastures, is a distinct and great gain to the landscape—an addition which, in a wide prospect, is scarcely less beautiful than those supreme elements of the picturesque, the winding river or the long arched aqueduct or viaduct; which latter itself is often an outcome of the railway, and is the making of more than one famous landscape; such as that of the Weald of Kent as seen from the coach road between Southborough and Tonbridge." In fact, nature has assimilated the railway; and great beauties have, as usual, asserted in this case also their kinship with great uses. Even the railway's ill-favoured sister, the electric telegraph, makes amends for its hideous presence along so many green road-sides by the æolian airs it gives forth in the lightest breeze; and it is to be hoped that, as we get used to them, the inherent ugliness of these endless files of black posts bound together by sagging wires will disturb the serenity of our country walks no more than the tranquillity of the swallows (who at certain times of year congregate along the wires, with their heads all looking one way,

to talk about their flight southwards) is troubled by the hasty and excited messages which are incessantly flashing beneath their toes. When, however, all is said that can be said for the electric telegraph in its artistic aspects, I cannot but think that its ugliness is too great to be tolerated by man or nature, and that ere long it will be found out that this skeleton may be safely and advantageously buried in the earth whose face it now deforms; and deforms, if possible, the more for the consciousness we have of the mystic life which is always flying through its motionless frame with the speed of spirit.

"The greatest gain for which the lover of the country has to thank the railways is the transfer which has been made by them of the old coach roads from the purposes of prose and business to those of poetry and pleasure. While business men—including the restless multitudes who make their pleasure business, seeking rather to lose themselves in change of agitation than to renew their lives in leisure and repose—are hurried along the flattest and dulllest lines of transit that can be chosen, at a rate and with noise and shaking which prevent their seeing anything when anything is to be seen, the true lover of the country remains in undisputed possession of thousands of miles of fine road, so beautiful, solitary, and strangely haunted by hints of a past time, that the quiet traveller in phaeton, or on foot, horse, or bicycle, seems to find himself in a sort of endless faëry-land laid out with lavish art and labour for the sole satisfaction of his pleasant idleness. He may drive, ride, or walk ten miles on one of these noble causeways, and never meet or pass even a cart or a drove of cattle. The old posting towns and villages at which he rests are filled with an almost supernatural quiet; and each has one or more spacious inns which are at his solitary disposal, as is the great range of stabling at that of his cob, if he has one. The dreamy dwellers in these places seem mostly to have forgotten whither the great roads which traverse them lead. I paused the other day where a main road forked, to ask where the road on the right hand led to; and the pretty and innocent young woman of whom I made the inquiry answered, 'To the beershop, sir.' A tender melancholy is the *sauce piquante* of beauty; and this feeling lingers everywhere about these roads and their inhabitants, and to this feeling, in the posting-stations especially, the rude and prosperous merriment of past days has given place. Of real

decay and of poverty amounting to hardship, they somehow show no signs ; though it is sometimes difficult to understand how this is. Hurst Green, for example, which is the old posting-station between Tunbridge Wells and Hastings, is little more than an assemblage of large inns, spacious stable yards and smithies ; but though everything is as quiet as if in a trance, all the inns and smithies are open, and stand contentedly waiting for the guest, the horse, or the job which never seems to come. A ham and a cold fowl or sirloin will probably be forthcoming from the larder of 'The George' at your demand for luncheon, and you will find no savour of antiquity about them ; and the ostler will promptly appear at the sound of your horse's hoofs in the yard, and will take him from you with as much *nonchalance* as if the advent of a traveller were a common occurrence.

"These roads generally follow the most picturesque tracts of country, as the railways take the dullest. If there be a long ridge of hills anywhere from which the beauties of half a dozen counties can be seen at once, the road will go out of its way to run along the top of it, and no valley is too deep to be dived into for a sight of its river or moated house. Everything about an old road is human and civilized. The adjacent timber has been planted, ages ago, with reference to it ; farm-houses, hamlets and gentlemen's mansions cherish its companionship ; whereas the railway darts from one dull station to another through tracts of absolute desert ; and if it happens to come upon a piece of country sufficiently sensational to attract the suffering traveller's notice, it will probably dive under it like a mole before he can say, 'Look !'

"The desertion of these roads by their ancient traffic has given their now rare wayfarers a personal interest in each other. Rencontres between pedestrians in these solitudes seem to justify and even call for mutual recognition and a word or two about the weather. If a lonely cavalier, cyclist or walker is passed by a bright barouche full of ladies from the neighbouring 'Place,' he continues his journey with a sense of having been in contact with the 'quality,' and should you see a young lady on foot and pushing her tricycle up a hill a mile long, with her brother or lover a furlong ahead—as he frequently is in such cases—you may offer your services without danger of being thought rude, except by the gentleman who has forfeited his right to interfere.

It is curious that the old coach roads are commonly much better kept up now that their uses are for the most part poetical, than they were when they were the arteries of the country's busy life. I can remember posting from Tunbridge Wells to Hastings before there was any railway, and when the turnpike charges formed nearly half of the cost of so travelling. The roads were, for the most part, beds of loose sand, 6 in. or 8 in. deep, and it was killing work for the horses. The other day I drove the whole distance easily in three hours and a half, excluding luncheon time at Hurst Green, over roads which were throughout as smooth and sound as those of a royal park."

There are not many left whose experience covers that stretch of time embracing the reign of William IV. and that which brings us down to this present latter part of Queen Victoria's. But, nevertheless, such an one has only lately retired from his active official duties in the person of Mr. Moses Hobbs, and all who are interested in the ways of the world, bygone and present, should thank him for the little book in which are recorded many of his lively adventures on the road during a period of fifty-six or seven years. He, indeed, can tell a good deal about the altered condition of the roads, not only in their general aspect and surroundings, but in their actual making and maintenance. The deep sandy ruts or the utter sloughs of treacherous mud and slush which in earlier days described the state of many a highway, have in his time merged into the splendid macadam which the modern wayfarer on two wheels or four now only knows. It is, however, with what may be called the more human side of his life that his readers will find the chief attraction in the little work; his perils and escapes, his daring efforts to perform punctually the offices with which as mail guard he was entrusted, they are, that form the great charm of his pages. For instance, once, while acting as guard of the Exeter mail, his driver, who was not quite sober, fell from his box and was killed. Mr. Hobbs tried to stop the horses, which started off at a gallop, but was unable to recover the reins, and in climbing back to his seat tumbled from the roof of the coach with no worse results than a sprained ankle and a few bruises. He was picked up by another coach, on which he travelled to the next stage, when he resumed his journey, for the runaway horses had taken the driverless coach on without injury. During the floods of 1852, Mr. Hobbs found

himself in a serious predicament. He had dismounted from the coach on a dark night and waded into the water up to his armpits to find the road for the driver, to whom he called to follow him. The driver came on accordingly, but did not stop to pick Mr. Hobbs up, and he remained three hours in the water, afraid to move lest he should get out of his depth. At last, by a desperate effort, he struggled on to Gloucester, where he was put to bed between warm blankets. Another time, in descending the road over Plinlimmon, coach, horses, passengers, driver and guard fell sixty feet down a precipice, in a terrible snowstorm, into a snowdrift. The passengers who were inside were cut by the broken glass, and two of the horses were killed, but, owing to the depth of the snow, the driver and guard escaped with a severe shaking. These incidents do not exhaust Mr. Hobbs' experiences. He ascribes his freedom from injury to his careful observation of his father's advice, "Never to injure his own health by drinking other people's." He left the road in 1854, when the Gloucester and Aberystwith coach ceased running, and after acting as a mail guard on the Great Western Railway for seven years, was stationed at Paddington in 1861, where he remained until his recent retirement.

In 1832 or thereabouts, when the great Reform Bill was agitating the whole community, railroads of course were but dreams of the fanatic; but in commenting on that epoch twenty years later, a popular journal described the efforts of Whiggism to convert itself into Liberalism, as "like the attempt of an old mail coachman or guard to turn stoker." In 1855 the coaching age had not long given up the ghost in the face of the increasing success and widening extension of railroads. Under these circumstances the writer chose his simile with discrimination when penning the sentence which we have just quoted. What would he say, however, had he read lately that "the last of the old mail guards is about to disappear from the service of the Post Office?" Fifty-six years have passed since Mr. Hobbs was selected to undertake the duties of guard of one of the royal mails. With a view to protecting the sacrosanct vehicle, its passengers and letter-bags from the assaults of marauding highwaymen, Mr. Hobbs was entrusted by the Postmaster-General with a long tin horn and a blunderbuss. What a world of suggestion is summed up in these few simple words!

Fifty-six years since King William IV. was on the throne, and gas had not long been introduced into the Metropolis and other big cities. Those who were schoolboys about 1835, and whom Time the Destroyer still spares, will remember what was meant by a long journey on the top of a mail coach which carried them by day and night, almost without stopping, to their distant destination. About that time the rivalry between four or five of the principal English highways was so keen that the rural residents upon each were always ready to claim that their road was, like the Appian Way of ancient Rome, "*regina viarum*"—"the queen of highways." In the eyes of Yorkshiremen, for instance, the Great North Road from London to York seemed to be more interesting and better constructed than "that *chef d'œuvre* of the immortal Telford"—as Mr. Birch Reynardson calls it—along which the Holyhead mail ran, covering two hundred and sixty-one miles between London and the Welsh coast in twenty-seven hours.

It was but the other day that the second Viscount Combermere passed away in his seventy-second year. In a racy letter from the pen of "Paul Pry," which appeared in the *Sporting Magazine* just sixty years since, we read that on a winter night in 1832 the first Lord Combermere, better known as Sir Stapleton Cotton, the dashing cavalry officer of the Peninsular War, was to be seen at two o'clock in the morning, prepared to take his seat beside Cracknall, the coachman of the Birmingham Tantivy, in whose honour the lately deceased Mr. Egerton Warburton wrote his brilliant ode, "The Tantivy Trot."

"Now for Leeds, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Holyhead, Chester, Liverpool," shouts, according to "Paul Pry," the little thick-set porter at the "Peacock," Islington, as one after another the north country mails dash up to the door, allowing the coachman and guard enough time to drain their "bottoms of brandy" and the passengers to shake themselves down before the long, cold journey commences.

"Any room for us?" shout a band of midland country graziers, who eye the more fortunate occupants of top seats with bitter disappointment.

"The box for Lord Combermere," says the crack coachman of the Tantivy, as the red-wheeled, red-panelled drag pulls up, the cynosure of every eye, at the "Peacock." His lordship, the

very beau-ideal of his class, proudly takes his seat by Cracknall's side. They are off, and before a dozen miles are surmounted, the old cavalry soldier learns that even war, with nights habitually passed, as the French say, *à la belle étoile*, has few hardships which require more fortitude and endurance than the box seat of a mail coach on a bitter cold night.

"Now, sir, time to get up," exclaims Boots at the "Peacock," on a November morning, to the little Tom Brown of Judge Hughes's ever-green tale. Punctual to the moment, the Tally Ho pulls up at the door as the clock strikes 3 a.m. "The young gentleman for Rugby" climbs to his place on the back seat, with the guard—a contemporary and, perhaps, a friend of Mr. Moses Hobbs—facing him. "I sometimes think," continues Judge Hughes, "that boys of this generation must be a deal tenderer fellows than we used to be. At any rate they are more comfortable travellers, for I see every one of them with his rug over his knees, keeping up the caloric in snugly-padded railway carriages." On the other hand, little Tom Brown, before he travels half a dozen miles, is unconscious whether he has any legs or feet. Cold has so benumbed his lower limbs that all sensation departs, and when the morning breaks they are thirty-five miles on the road, and the near approach of breakfast gladdens every heart. A bright fire gleams through the red curtains of the bar window as the Tally Ho pulls up at the front door, which is wide open.

"Now, sir," says the guard to little Tom, "just you jump down and take a drop of something to keep out the cold." In an instant the strangely-contrasted pair are before the bar, where a neat maid plies them with early purl, which sets Tom coughing as he never coughed before. In the front parlour stands a long table covered with the whitest of cloths. It bears a cold pigeon pie, a Yorkshire ham, a round of boiled beef, and a loaf of household bread on a wooden trencher. In an instant the stout old waiter enters the low-browed room, puffing under a tray laden with kidneys and a steak, rashers of bacon and poached eggs, buttered toast and muffins, coffee and tea, all smoking hot. Tom falls to with a will. In his biographer's words, "he puts away kidneys and pigeon pie, and imbibes coffee until his skin is as tight as a drum." Presently he walks majestically forth, and takes stock of the horses with a connoisseur's eye. Out comes the burly coachman, licking a tough-looking black cheroot; three

whiffs of which would knock any one else out of time. It is a pleasant picture of old coaching days, one that Washington Irving might have written, and in which Mr. Dolby records that Charles Dickens took great delight.

Strange as it may seem to younger generations, Mr. Moses Hobbs must have witnessed such scenes many scores of times. Lord Rosebery once remarked to a friend that in Lady De Ros, who died last autumn, and in the still living Sir Austin Henry Layard, we possess two veterans whose experiences carry us back almost to the Dark Ages. Has not Lady De Ros related, in *Murray's Magazine*, that just before Waterloo she was often permitted by the Iron Duke to ride his famous charger, Copenhagen, who, being short of work, kicked her off in the suburbs of Brussels? Has not Sir Austin Henry Layard recorded, in the *Quarterly Review*, that he was lunching sixty years since with Lord Beaconsfield's father at No. 1, Bloomsbury Square, when a hurried messenger entered the room and announced that "Ben had again been arrested for debt?" Few readers will fail to recognize in "Ben" the future Prime Minister and head of the Conservative party. Equally anomalous does it seem that an official should be living who remembers the "moving accidents by flood and field" which awaited the mails when as yet railways were almost unknown, and when Sir Walter Scott was posting from Abbotsford to London, and spending four days and four nights on the road, while Sydney Smith was journeying in his own carriage from London to Combe Florey, in Somersetshire, "and living," as he puts it himself, "for three days on veal cutlets and waiters." "The Road" afforded much enjoyment to those who travelled a short way on a fine midsummer day; but a journey, say, from London to Edinburgh, when the glass was below zero and the north wind blew pins and needles, must be experienced before its terrors could be gauged.

Finally, it is not a little curious that, just as Mr. Hobbs's memory is being jogged—as it doubtless will be—by old lovers of coaching days, there is a revival of "The Road" in the shape of packet post vans drawn by four horses, tooled by a coachman, and with a guard behind. It is a striking illustration of the old maxim, "*On revient toujours à ses premiers amours.*"

A Buried Sin.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLAIRE'S FAITH.

HAVING placed the letter in Claire's hand Mr. Watson would have left the room, but at a sign from Mrs. Blaine he remained. She dreaded the effect the communication might have upon Claire, and felt that he, being an old friend of the family and cognizant of every point in the family history, might help them through this crisis by the strength of his presence and good counsel. Silence, painful, waiting silence, held them breathless as Claire gravely read the letter through; she made no outward or visible show of emotion, no hysterical outburst. Having got to the end, she turned back to the first page and went through it again. Then she looked up, and, quoting from the letter, said quite calmly:

"My father says, 'I will never show a felon's face at Knaresborough! I will never return till my good name is restored to me, and my fame cleared from the wicked slander that sent me from my home a broken, despairing man. I have lived through my cruel sentence, and now wait God's time.'" After a momentary pause she added, "Explain, please—tell me what this means?"

There could be no beating about the bush, no puerile preliminaries now. They had to deal with no emotional, hysterical girl; Claire had developed with strange suddenness into the woman. They realized the position at once—she meant to know the bare naked facts of the case of which her father's letter had already given her an inkling. With as much delicacy and tenderness as the occasion allowed, they told her the miserable story of the trouble that had overwhelmed them in the long ago. If they attempted to clothe the ugly skeleton with excuses, or bring forward extenuating circumstances, she resented it, saying with an impatient frown:

"Don't try to soften things—there is no need for you to make excuses as though you were talking of a guilty person—you are

speaking of *my father*, who is not guilty ; God tells me so, and God will help me to set him right. I only want to know why he was accused, and on what evidence he was found guilty—tell me only that."

She kept them to the point, and would not let them wander an inch out of the way for either comment or remark. When Mr. Watson spoke it was with clear logical sense, dwelling solely on the legal, not at all on the sentimental aspect of affairs. He was most kindly considerate and sympathetic to Claire, as her aunt and grandmother were tender and affectionate ; but she felt with indignation and bitterness that not one of them shared her feelings respecting her father—their reticence and non-expression of belief in his innocence indicated to her that they believed him guilty of what was laid to his charge. Such a multiplicity of feelings agitated her mind and tangled her heart's affections—she felt as though she had loved and trusted and eaten the bread of *his* enemies for all these years ; she was angry with herself, with them, and with all the cruel world that had ranged itself against him ! All her heart and soul went out in the one great yearning to be with him, to comfort and cheer him, leaving all the rest of the world behind her.

"I suppose you meant well," she said, regarding them with reproachful eyes ; "but it was cruel to let me live in ignorance—to let me be gay and happy—to wear my pretty dresses"—she plucked at her sleeve as though she would tear it off—"while he, my own dear father, was wearing sackcloth—chained to a gang perhaps of thieves and murderers—working, enduring, suffering untold miseries ; and you have been silent—never heeding his miserable degradation—enjoying the world, and never lifted your voice or stretched a hand to help him !" Her eyes, full of indignant fire, flashed upon her aunt and grandmother as she spoke, and Mrs. Thurlowe, who could ill bear the reproaches which in her heart she felt were not undeserved, said with some touch of resentment :

"We did all we could at the time, had the best legal advice, moved heaven and earth to prove that he was innocent of the crime he was charged with ; but we could not do it ; the facts were too strong against him, and we were forced against our will to accept the verdict."

"You are his mother !" exclaimed Claire ; "he was your own

flesh and blood—yet you believed him guilty—that was the worst of all!”

“My own flesh and blood is neither fireproof nor sin-proof. Justice and truth stand first and foremost above all the world—if your right eye offend you, pluck it out, saith the Scripture—and according to the Scripture I act.”

“And let your son, your only son, go condemned by the law, condemned by his mother’s heart!” exclaimed Claire, “without a word of faith, hope, or comfort to cheer him through his long wretched exile! No wonder he will not come back to face his people when their hearts are so hard against him.”

“You are mistaken, Claire; though we condemn the sin, we love the sinner. Whenever he comes back, we shall receive him with open arms, and forget and forgive all that has gone by.”

“Forget and forgive!” repeated the girl scornfully; “it is for *him* to forget and forgive—not *you*! You would receive him as a returned criminal—a repentant sinner! not as the misjudged, cruelly used man and martyr that he is.”

“You have been taken by surprise, and are hot, angry and unjust, Claire,” exclaimed Mrs. Blaine. “Whatever our belief, the terrible facts were forced upon us. You know temptation sometimes assails the wisest and best of men, and for one moment’s fall they pay the expiation of a life. For my part, as my mother knows, I was never quite convinced—I have always doubted—thought there might be some strange mystery which Harold might explain——”

“That’s better,” rejoined Claire; “it is something to give your brother the benefit of a doubt, but——”

“My dear young lady,” said Mr. Watson, now hastening to put in his word, “I think you are both unreasonable and unjust. What is the use of digging up a long buried skeleton? The past *is* past; we have the present and the future to look to; that will give us work to do. I quite understand and sympathize with your filial affections, my dear child; so I am sure do we all; but you must not let your feelings on one side lead you astray on another. I think you overlook one thing: however unfortunate family matters may have been, your relations here have shown their respect and sympathetic affection for your father by the loving care and guardianship of *you* for all these years.”

He had touched the right chord now. The memory of the

bright happy days passed under their care, from her childhood upwards came surging up from her heart, and filled her eyes, for aunt and grandmother, on whom for the moment she had so harshly turned, had been most faithful and tender guardians, had indeed been father and mother and all to her, and had never let her know a cloud or a care. Tears rushed to her eyes now; she flung one arm round the neck of one, and stretched out her hand to the other, and said sweetly:

"Please forgive me. All this has come upon me with such terrible suddenness that even now I can hardly believe—but there!" she added quickly, "don't let us talk of it, but think of what is to be done. Of course my dear father must come home."

"Which you see by his letter he positively declines to do," said Mr. Watson, repeating some extracts, and so he shifted the conversation from the painful part of the subject, and brought legal and other matters under discussion, leaving the sentimental portion quite out of the question. After wasting a great many words, as people do in almost every discussion, they separated the chaff of useless suggestions from the grain of practical common-sense, and it was decided, to their mutual satisfaction, that Mr. Watson should make immediate arrangements to go himself to California (so much more may be done in a day's talk than a month's writing), have an interview with Harold Thurlowe, and endeavour to persuade him to return, and, failing in that, should obtain such legal powers as would enable his next-of-kin to deal with the estates, etc. At this suggestion Claire brightened, and said:

"Of course that is the best thing to be done, indeed the one thing that ought to be done; and I shall go with you, Mr. Watson."

"You!" they exclaimed simultaneously in amazement.

"Yes, why not?" replied Claire decidedly. "Please don't say anything against it, for I mean to go."

"Claire, Claire! you take away my breath," said Mrs. Blaine. "The idea of a girl like you taking such a journey, and *alone*, for it is impossible that either I or Grannie can go with you."

"Mr. Watson is going, and he will take care of me," persisted Claire. "I know it is a long and expensive journey, but papa will be rich now, you tell me, and Mr. Watson can therefore easily find the money for my expenses."

Mrs. Blaine looked from one to the other in amazed perplexity. Her only idea of travelling was the removing from town to country, perhaps to take a dip into North Wales, or a few days' run through the Isle of Wight; once in her younger days she had crossed over to Ireland and made the regulation tour through the country; that had been travelling enough to last her for the rest of her life. The idea of crossing the Atlantic, facing the storms and perils of the sea, then through thousands of miles of strange country, through mountainous regions and lonely lands, occupied—as her imagination pictured them!—by savages and wild beasts, seemed to her very moon-struck madness; for, like all home-staying folk, she exaggerated the dangers and difficulties of the Light Continent. Although she *knew*, she failed to realize the fact that increasing thousands of tourists travel every day through these distant regions in all comfort and security. The difficulties to be encountered seemed to her insurmountable, especially for a girl like Claire, accustomed to the luxuries and comforts of a smooth, quiet home life. She raised her voice in feeble persuasion.

"I don't think you know what you are talking about, Claire. I see no necessity for your going at all; indeed I think it is a most foolish proceeding. Mr. Watson can transact all the business and bring back all the news. You have no idea what an ocean voyage is! I would never venture to face the Atlantic! and still worse, that dreadful overland journey, to say nothing of train wreckers and robbers; the trains are always running off the track, and I hear that it is quite a common thing for people to be starved in snow-storms, and——"

"My dear lady," exclaimed Mr. Watson, "you are going a little too far. In these days the overland journey may be made as easily and pleasantly as a trip to Paris, and there are no snow-storms at this season. I quite sympathize with this dear girl's desire, and shall be delighted to take all such care of her as her father's old friend can."

"You encourage the notion," exclaimed Mrs. Blaine with uplifted brows. "I must say it seems to me contrary to all common-sense to take such a long troublesome journey. No practical good can come of it; it is for mere sentiment's sake."

"That is exactly what it is, auntie," replied Claire; "mere sentimental loving longing to see my dear father's face. But practical good will come of it too. For I shall bring him back with me,

I *know* I shall, and we shall find some way to make him stand as clear in the world's eyes as he stands in mine."

"What do you say, mother? You have not spoken at all," said Mrs. Blaine.

"Nothing," she answered; "Claire was always self-willed! If I were to oppose her going, she would be more firmly resolved to go. Nothing *I* could say would affect her."

"No, it would not indeed," said Claire, with sparkling eyes. "I don't like to seem disrespectful, grandmamma, but I shall never forgive you—*never*—for your unfaith in him—your son and my father!"

"Evidently respect for age has not formed part of your education, Claire," said Mrs. Thurlowe somewhat sternly.

"People should be respected for what they *are*, and for what they *do*—not because they are old—which is no merit of theirs!—people can't help getting old. But when is the earliest, the very earliest time we can start?" she inquired, addressing Mr. Watson, who left the family discussion as much as possible to the ladies themselves, and was not sorry to talk over the more practical matters.

Mrs. Blaine brought forward a few more of what she called common-sense views, but all to no purpose. Both aunt and grandmother felt that Mr. Watson silently approved and supported Claire, which they were rather surprised that he, a practical legal mind, should do. There was no time to be wasted in arguments. This was Thursday, and Mr. Watson thought he might be able to arrange his business so as to start by the "City of Rome" on the following Wednesday. It was finally arranged that Claire should spend the intervening days with Mrs. Watson, who, like her husband, was an old friend of the family, and, under her chaperonage and guided by her judgment, should do her shopping and make the necessary preparations for the voyage.

Mrs. Blaine was quite content with this arrangement, as she was herself as ignorant as a baby of the requirements and the hundred and one trifles that make the sum total of one's comfort on such occasions; and Mrs. Watson was American born, though she had lived many years in England, and had been accustomed to constantly cross the Atlantic, visiting her old home and relatives. She thought no more of the voyage than ordinary mortals think of a visit to the Isle of Wight. She knew all the

petty details connected with travelling, and was just the right person to superintend and advise Claire in making her purchases.

"You are very kind and considerate in thinking of us," said Mrs. Blaine, addressing Mr. Watson; "but you are quite sure it will be quite convenient to Mrs. Watson to receive Claire? You know we are making a heavy demand upon her time as well as on her hospitality. Of course I will write to her at once, but there is no time for the passing of letters to and fro. What is to be done must be done at once."

"Of course," rejoined Mr. Watson, "and we shall be able to arrange things easily enough. If you decide that things shall be as we have proposed, I will telegraph to my wife at once, and she will be happy to receive Claire and make things smooth and pleasant for her. Women love to have a hand in their friends' affairs, and I am sure she will delight in going about with Claire and helping her to her travelling dresses and all other necessities. She knows exactly what will be required, and she will enjoy managing for Claire as much as managing for herself. If you can put me up I will stay here to-night, and take Claire back with me by an early train to-morrow." He started for the Telegraph Office; Claire went upstairs and rushed into Ruth's room. It was unusual for the girls to burst in upon Ruth so unceremoniously; and from Claire's whirlwind-like entrance and excited face, she judged that something had happened, and she also knew it must be connected with that one matter which at that time filled all their hearts. She pushed her writing away and turned to Claire.

"Well, dear?" she said interrogatively.

"Ruth," exclaimed Claire, almost sobbing with agitation, "I am going to California to fetch papa." Seeing the look of amazed incredulity that came into Ruth's face, she added, "Yes, it is quite true. I am going with Mr. Watson. We start next Tuesday." She nestled down by Ruth's side as she added in a low voice as though she did not like to hear herself speak, "They have told me *everything*; all the cruel story about papa—why he went away, and why he won't come back—you know? Have you known always?"

"Yes, always," she answered, smoothing the girl's hair with sympathetic affection. "I was at Knaresborough all the time! all that terrible time! and, Claire darling, when they found him guilty, I left my home, and came to Mrs. Blaine, and, as you

know, have made my home here and been with you all ever since."

"Ah!" exclaimed Claire eagerly, "let me look in your face. I think, though, I can tell by your voice—you knew my dear father? You *knew him*, and you don't believe——"

"No, Claire, no," she answered, interrupting her quickly and emphatically. "I never believed him guilty—never! I believe in his truth and honour as I do in my own soul, in spite of all the evidence and the law's decision. I feel he did not—he could not have committed the crime laid to his charge."

"Thank God! thank God!" exclaimed Claire with great emotion, "there is *one* in this wide world to do him justice. I am glad it should be *you*; but *they*, his own mother and sister," she added bitterly, "are both against him."

"No, Claire, no; not both; your aunt always took his part."

"In a milk and watery sort of way," rejoined Claire.

"And as for your grandmother, Claire, she is a proud stern woman, and—she never loved Harold overmuch! Your aunt Anna was her favourite. The boy was too like his father, and they never got on very well together. He was a little wild and wayward, perhaps extravagant in his early days, and she could not make allowance for his high spirits; then his marriage, with its accompanying vexations, angered and distressed her; then he was in difficulties when the charge was brought, and she was enraged, maddened, by the thought that *he, her son*, should drag his name in the mire, and stain it by such a crime as that. It was bad enough to be accused; that in her eyes was a crime in itself—but to be condemned! and she was one of those narrow-minded people who believe in the infallibility of the law. Did they tell you everything? All the details, Claire?" she inquired anxiously.

"They told me the one cruel fact; that was enough," said Claire. "But he will come back; you will be glad to see him?"

"Yes, indeed," she answered fervently.

"And, there is a mystery somewhere—some truths that have been hidden away somewhere, and never brought to light. Ruth darling, you believed in my father, and have always been so good to *me*—and you will help me now! Shut your eyes and go back through all those years, and live through the old days over again. Tell me everything—every trifle. I may find some clue

in the smallest thing, and if I only get the faintest clue, you will help me, and we will unravel the wrong-doing, and let my dear father lift his head and look the world squarely in the face once more."

"I will do what I can." Ruth's face was very pale now. She seemed indeed the more distressed of the two. "But did they tell you, Claire, that it was *my* father who gave the weightiest evidence against *yours*?"

"Oh, Ruth," said Claire, and kneeling by her side she gazed searchingly into Ruth's eyes, and suddenly the tears rushed blindingly into her own, and she broke down into sobs. "Oh, poor Ruth! dear—poor—dearest Ruth!" and even Ruth's self-command gave way, and the two were locked, crying heartily, in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XIV.

HER WILL AND HER WAY!

FROM the moment that the announcement of these projected doings was put in circulation, there seemed to be a moral earthquake, and general upheaval of everything in the household. Dolly was almost as much excited about Claire's impending departure as Claire herself, and went with her heart and soul in her plans and purpose. Not a word of opposition fell from Dolly's saucy lips now. She was all on Claire's side, and the most tender and sympathetic of friends. She exercised her vivacious tongue, and devoted her energies to making things bright and pleasant for Claire, during her last few hours at The Friars. She cleared the atmosphere of all gloomy forebodings in which the elder ladies were inclined to indulge; and if an attempt was made to discuss any vexed question or embarrass Claire's movements, her ready wit fired off a volley of fun-pointed arrows, and silenced the enemy on the spot.

The sun of hope shone through the cloud which had at the first shock shadowed Claire's spirit, and every moment she grew stronger in the faith that in her hands lay the clearing of her father's name. She could not tell how at the moment, but instinct and filial devotion told her it was to be done; the way and the means would be shown to her in time, and her face, which had been so white and woe-begone, was soon aglow with hope

and love. The idea that Mr. Levison, Ruth's father, and the trusted friend of the family, had, in any way, by giving compulsory evidence or not, been concerned in bringing about the conviction of her father was a perplexity and a pain to her. She was in too great a whirl of excitement at present to be able to think of things calmly ; one thought got tangled with and crossed by another, amalgamating in a confused mass in her brain ; but when she got to sea, during the quiet monotony of the voyage, she would have time to put her thoughts in order and decide on some plan of future action ; then she could talk things over with Mr. Watson, and she was sure he would give her all the information and assistance in his power. One thing, however, was plain to her : she had great reliance upon Ruth's clear-sightedness and judgment, and had hoped to secure her as an ally, that they might together work out the redemption of her father from the dishonour that bound him ; but since Mr. Levison's name had been brought forward she could hardly expect Ruth to join her in any course whereby her own father might become unpleasantly involved, for though he was not a model parent and there was small sympathy or intimacy between them, still he was her father ; there was no doing away with that fact ; and the ties of flesh and blood are not to be easily loosened. Well, this was all matter for further consideration ; there was little time for either thinking or talking just now. The family were all busy arranging for Claire's departure the next morning, when she and Mr. Watson were to leave The Friars and so take the first step on their "outward bound" journey.

Mrs. Blaine and Dolly would very much have liked to accompany Claire on her visit to London, for Mrs. Watson had answered her husband's telegram by another inviting the family to take up their abode there for the next few days ; but Mrs. Blaine felt it would be taking undue advantage of her almost enforced hospitality to inflict *three* guests upon her. Besides, there was so much to be done, and the whole family conclave could hardly go shopping together—the one would embarrass the movements of the other ; so it was at length decided that Mrs. Blaine and Dolly were to go to London in time for luncheon at Mrs. Watson's on Monday, and down to Liverpool on the Tuesday, sleeping there one night, and seeing the party off on Wednesday.

The next morning, Friday, Mr. Watson and Claire left The

Friars, not, however, before the two girls had taken advantage of a few minutes' leisure, when they were quite alone, for a brief confidential talk together.

"What are you going to do about Algernon, Claire?" inquired Dolly. "Surely you will let him know. What will he think? You must give him some reason for your running off to America in this sudden way."

"I shall write to him as soon as I get to town," answered Claire, "and of course see him and tell him *everything*."

"Everything! Oh, Claire! why need you do that?" exclaimed Dolly. "Surely you are not bound to tell *him* what has been kept secret even from *us* for all these years—it will be too humiliating for us *all*!"

"Most of all to *me*," replied Claire. "But that can't be helped; it has got to be done. You don't suppose I *like* doing it, Dolly? I think the truth, the plain honest truth, is always best to be told, and I shall conceal *nothing* from Algy; it is not right I should. I think it is only fair to him as well as to myself that he should know."

"Claire, darling, think what you are doing," said Dolly, very earnestly for her. "Under the circumstances, I am sure you are justified in keeping silence. Algernon Kent has nothing to do with Uncle Harold's affairs."

"Perhaps not in a general way," replied Claire; "but in a matter like this he has everything to do. A man has a right to know *anything* that touches the good name of the girl he marries; and *mine* is darkened by the shadow of my dear father's trouble—what they *call* his 'crime'—but that he is not guilty I would stake my life!" Her face glowed with the faith that was so strong in her heart, as she added, "Do you think God would have let me be happy all these years if my father had been a *real* criminal? I should have known it; God would in some way have put that knowledge in my heart."

"But He didn't, Claire," observed Dolly.

"No, because it isn't true," she answered eagerly.

"And He has let you be happy all these years, even while my uncle was suffering. Innocent he may be, but he has paid the penalty just the same as if he had been guilty. For my part I think it is much worse to suffer for another man's sin than for your own, Claire. If you had known your father was innocent

and suffering, you would have been more miserable than if you had known he was guilty."

"Please let it rest; you don't understand," exclaimed Claire irritably. "Just now you were talking of Algy."

"Yes," replied Dolly; "for your own sake, Claire, I advise you to keep silence about this miserable story. If you really cared for Algy you would not run the risk of losing him. Men are queer creatures, and when he knows he mayn't want to marry you any more—he may give you up."

"Of course that is why I tell him," replied Claire. "I hope we shall both be willing to give one another up. Anything else is impossible now."

"Why, Claire, what lukewarm affections you must have; and you seemed so dead gone on one another too! If you really cared you *couldn't* talk in such a way."

"Can't you understand that it is because I care for him so much that I am willing to part with him?" said Claire flushing deeply. "There is no other course open to us. How could I look into his true honest eyes, and feel I had this ugly secret hidden in my heart? take his good name in exchange for my tainted one? It would be like leading him into a pit blindfold, to wake up and find himself covered with the slime of infamy and disgrace—to find, instead of the bright happy girl he fell in love with at The Friars, he had married a convict's daughter."

"You take a gloomy, pessimistical sort of view of things," said Dolly. "Depend upon it, things will settle down all right when my uncle comes home. There is all the difference in the world between a rich man and a poor one. People will forget all about the past—if they have not forgotten already."

"I wonder they have let us remain in ignorance so long," exclaimed Claire, struck suddenly by the thought. "Why, of course it must have been a public scandal a dozen years ago! Everybody knew, yet nobody ever hinted it to us. It must have seemed strange—odious—to have seen *me*, the daughter, dancing through the world happy and gay, while *he* was— There! I wonder some cruel tongue did not poison our lives with a whisper of the truth."

"Oh, come, Claire, people are bad enough, but not such unmitigated brutes as that. Many respectable parents may have

an ugly skeleton stowed away in the background somewhere. Besides, don't you remember now how we've dodged about from place to place and seemed to have so few old friends, and you and I have always been kept out of the way of Knaresborough people, and were sent abroad to school? But don't worry about what people may think now. I daresay they have forgotten all about uncle's unfortunate affair by this time."

"Whether they forget or whether they remember does not alter the case in the least," she answered. "Besides, people never forget anything bad. Good may be forgotten, evil never. I daresay things that happened so long ago may have faded from their memory, so many other things more startling and terrible have happened since; but his coming back, especially under such circumstances, will revive it. The better a man's position is, the more mud they will throw at him. No, I quite realize everything, Dolly. I know we shall have to drag through troubled waters, but all will come out bright and clear at last, only we must be patient and wait. That is why I am going to say good-bye to Algernon."

"You are very selfish, Claire. You don't think of the pain and disappointment you cause to *him*; and I think, considering that you are almost engaged to Algernon, he has a right to expect some consideration. I would rather bury a hundred secrets ten feet underground than run the risk of being separated from my George, especially when the telling them could be of no possible good."

Claire put her arms round her cousin and kissed her, saying:

"Dolly, dear, your tongue never does justice to your heart—your actions are always so much better than your words. I know, whatever happens, you will always *do* exactly what you think is right. We none of us can do more than that."

"Claire, dear," responded Dolly affectionately, "speak to mamma. Tell her what you are going to do before you leave."

"I will," said Claire; and she did so.

Mrs. Blaine raised no obstacle in the way of Claire's communicating the family trouble to Algernon Kent. Clearer-sighted and with more worldly experience than Dolly, she saw that it would have to be made known to him one day, for to a certainty Sir Harold Thurlowe's return would recall the memory of the old

troublesome time, and it was as well to have the credit of doing the right thing—it was humiliating, but it couldn't be helped. She little knew that one silent neighbour had known the secret all along, and kept it even from the knowledge of her own sons!

The next morning, by an early train, Mr. Watson and Claire left The Friars. All the family, except Ruth, felt some doubt and misgiving as to the wisdom and result of the step Claire was taking. They had rather she had received their information as they believed she would, and let matters run their course without interference of hers. Not so Ruth. She would have been grievously disappointed had Claire acted otherwise than she was doing. She could not bid her "good-bye" and speak her last few words in the presence of the whole family, so she called Claire into her room and took leave of her there. Many cheering words of love and hope she whispered to her as she embraced her again and again.

"Come, Claire," exclaimed Dolly, bursting into the room, "the carriage is at the door, and you have only just time to catch the train."

A last loving embrace and Claire descended.

The trio of ladies were grouped at the open hall door. Mr. Watson was fussing around, patting the horses and seeing that the luggage and small baggage was properly arranged and nothing left behind—Mrs. Blaine dressed ready to go with Claire to the station and see her off by the train. Mrs. Thurlowe took leave of her granddaughter in her usual grim, unemotional manner. Claire whispered a few last words in her ear, and she answered:

"I pray it may end so. Give me the occasion and I will bend my stiff old knees to God for my son's sake more gladly than I have ever done for my own! But sink or swim, God bless you, child!"

Her thin lips touched the girl's cheek and she was gone.

Claire glanced up at Ruth's window. She was there, and as they drove away leaned out and waved her handkerchief, watching till the sound of the wheels died upon her ears and the carriage and its beloved occupants became a mere speck in the distance.

Arrived in London, the travellers drove at once to Mr. Watson's pretty house in Westbourne Street. Claire was received with

affectionate cordiality by Mrs. Watson, a kind, motherly woman, who was deeply interested in all the Thurlowe family, with whom her husband had been legally connected for so many years. Claire's position was calculated to win her most sympathetic interest, especially as she had known her father in his bright youth as well as in his darker manhood.

After the first greeting and settling down in her temporary home, Claire's first thought was to take Mrs. Watson into her confidence respecting her position in regard to Algernon Kent, and to request permission to invite him to the house next day for a final interview before she sailed for America. To this Mrs. Watson promptly acceded. It was, she said, the right thing to do.

Before Claire retired to rest that night she sat down and wrote to Algernon—only a brief note, asking him to come to Westbourne Street the next morning (Saturday), as she was in town for a few days, and was to sail for America on Wednesday morning next.

This letter was delivered to Algernon as he sat taking his ease at his bachelor breakfast the following morning. If a bomb had fallen at his feet and exploded in those quiet chambers of his he could not have been more surprised. The remainder of his breakfast was left untouched. He threw off his lounging jacket and flung on his coat, but, hurried as he was, he did not forget to consult his looking-glass to see that his hair and his necktie were all right, for, whatever the emergency, a man will not face the world with one disordered or the other awry.

In a very few minutes—indeed, almost in less time than it takes to write it—he was driving fast in the fastest hansom to Westbourne Street, greatly exercised in mind, and too bewildered to indulge in conjecture, only mentally ejaculating to himself the while, "Going to America! Great heaven! what can it all mean?"

(To be continued.)